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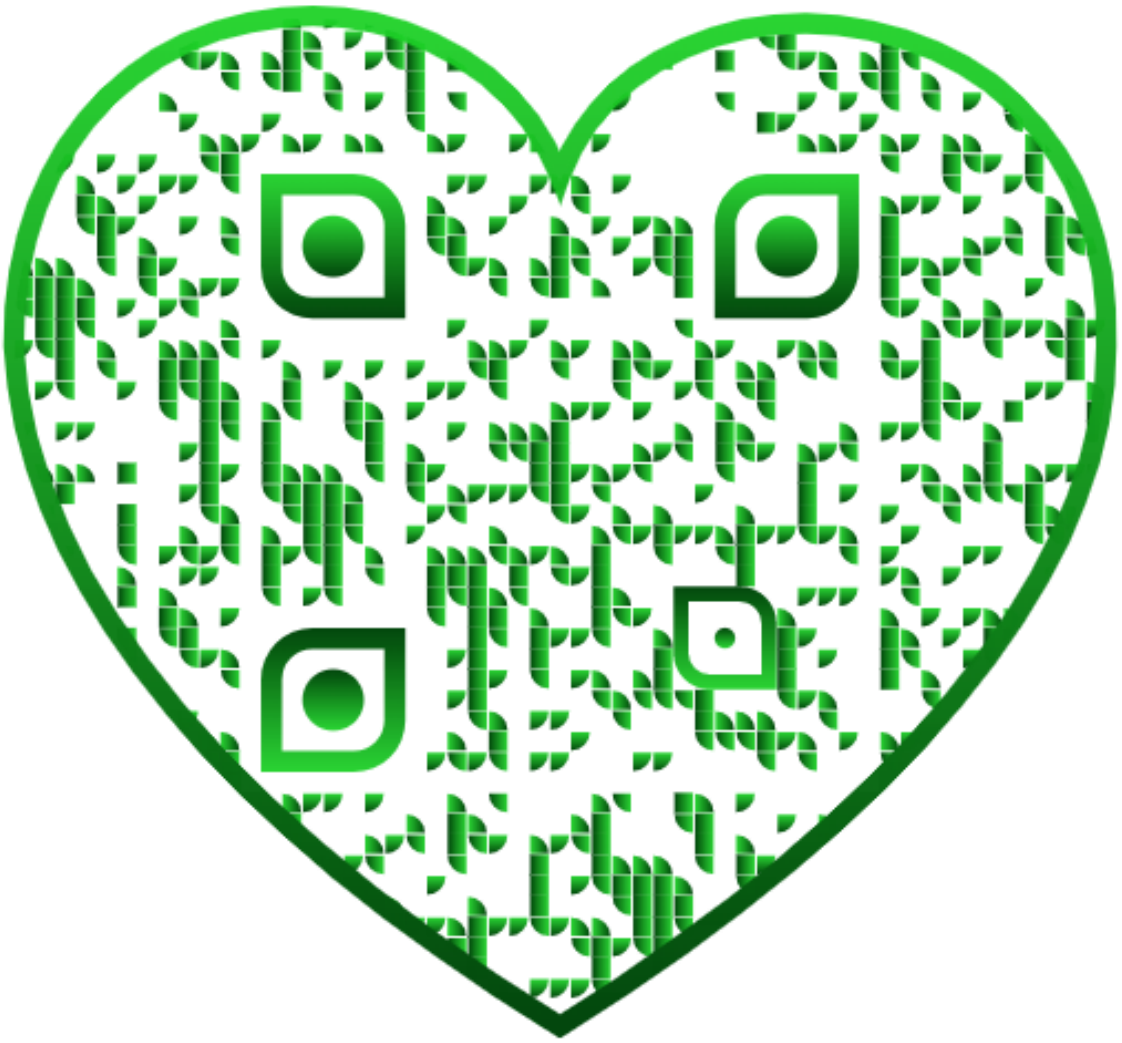

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Photo: Stefan Booth

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News

By Mike Flynn, Kevin Whitlock and Jon Newey

For the latest breaking news visit **www.jazzwise.com**

Pat Metheny, Robert Glasper, Cassie Kinoshi and Veronica Swift booked for 2024 EFG London Jazz Festival programme

The first names have been confirmed for this year's EFG London Jazz Festival which runs from 15-24 November at concert halls, clubs and live performance spaces across the capital. Chief among these is global guitar star Pat Metheny who returns to the festival for the first time since 2017, to perform in a purely solo setting at the Barbican in support of his new album, *MoonDial (*BMG), on Saturday 16 November. Due for release on 26 July, the album continues the stripped back theme of *Dream Box*, with the guitarist exploring songs such as 'Here, There and Everywhere' and 'Everything Happens To Me/Somewhere' alongside newly written material. Also announced for the Barbican line-up will be ECM-associated Tunisian oudist Anouar Brahem and his Quartet (17 Nov); and the high-flying Crosscurrents trio of bassist Dave Holland, saxophonist Chris Potter and tabla maestro Zakir Hussain (22 Nov).

The Festival's first night gala concert, Jazz Voice, will once again open the programme at the Royal Festival Hall; but for the first time in its history the 40-piece festival jazz orchestra will be conducted by both its founder Guy Barker *and* Peter Edwards, who's best known for his longstanding work with the Tomorrow's Warriors-affiliated Nu Civilisation Orchestra. The Southbank Centre's programme also includes big headline shows from Brazilian vocal star Marisa Monte (16 Nov) and UK pianist-singer Jamie Cullum (22 Nov).

Other orchestral manoeuvres include: Tim Garland's Lighthouse Trio (with Gwilym Simcock and Asaf Sirkis) joined by the Britten Sinfonia, trumpeter Yazz Ahmed and violinist Thomas Gould at Milton Court (19 Nov); drum legend Billy Cobham marks his 80th birthday year with a new large-scale collaboration with Guy Barker and the BBC Concert Orchestra (Queen Elizabeth Hall, 20 Nov), and saxophonist/composer Cassie Kinoshi's seed. join forces with the London Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican (21 Nov).

Camden's venue KOKO has undergone a resurgence since its £70million renovation in 2022, and will host notable headline shows at the LJF including a sizeable return to the capital for multi-Grammy winning keyboardist Robert Glasper (18 Nov); and Meshell Ndegeocello's show on 15 November will be one of her biggest UK gigs to date. Cadogan Hall continues to play a central role in the programme with its line-up so far including guitarist Julian Lage (21 Nov); ECM pianist Tord Gustavsen (15 Nov) and Mack Avenue-signed vocalist Veronica Swift (16 Nov).

Further shows announced include a piano duet between rising Greek talent Tania Giannouli and Swiss time-signature wizard Nik Bartsch (Wigmore Hall, 22 Nov); Palestinian pianist Faraj Suleiman performs tunes from his latest LP, *As Much As It Takes* (Kings Place Hall One, 17 Nov); and Nordic trumpeter Arve Henriksen and Dutch pianist Harmen Fraanje recreate their new ECM release, *Touch of Time* (Kings Place Hall Two, 22 Nov). Two string-laden concerts close out the festival's second weekend with the BBC Concert Orchestra and trumpeter Giveton Gelin performing arranger Carlos Simon's suite, 'Coltrane: Legacy for Orchestra' (Queen Elizabeth Hall, 24 Nov); and the Nu Civilisation Orchestra performs Duke Ellington's 'New Orleans Suite' (Kings Place Hall One, 24 Nov). More names will be announced in the coming months. *Jazzwise* is festival media partner.

For full line-up details and tickets visit www.efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk

London Afrobeat Collective and Allysha Joy help Ealing Jazz Fest hit 30 in style

The Ealing Jazz Festival takes over West London's Walpole Park as it marks its 30th anniversary on 3-4 August with an eclectic bill of jazz, neo-soul and global grooves. Held annually, the line-up features vocalist/keyboardist Allysha Joy, the horn-led London Afrobeat Collective, the jazz-meets-broken-beats of Tanhai Collective and contemporary soul singer Mica Sefia backed by her 11-piece band. South London based music performance and education group Youthsayers offer progressive jazz and Latin sounds. The Festival is part of The Ealing Summer Festivals series.

For more information visit www.ealingsummerfestivals.com

Magnus Öström and Dan Berglund celebrate 30 years of e.s.t. with live album

In 1993 three Swedish musicians – pianist Esbjörn Svensson, drummer Magnus Öström and bassist Dan Berglund – started what was soon to become known as e.s.t. (Esbjorn Svensson Trio). Their snowballing success was cut short by the pianist's untimely death aged 44 in a tragic diving accident on 14 June 2008, ending a 15-year run in which the band became regarded as the most influential jazz group of the time; their blend of high-octane improvisation and Nordic and electronic influences won them a huge global fanbase.

To mark the 30th anniversary of the group's formation, Öström and Berglund joined forces with close musical friends – pianist Joel Lyssarides, multi-reedist Magnus Lindgren, trumpeter Verneri Pohjola and guitarist Ulf Wakenius – to give two major concerts in October 2023, one at the Kölner Philharmonie, the other at the Filadelfia church in Stockholm. These saw the larger line-up play a selection of quintessential pieces from the e.s.t. repertoire. The results are to be released as an album, *e.s.t. 30,* on 31 May on ACT Music, with the tracklisting including extended versions of favourites such as 'From Gagarin's Point of View', 'Eighthundred Streets by Feet', 'Tuesday Wonderland' and the euphoric 'Elevation of Love'.

For more info visit www.actmusic.com/en

Editor's Note

While the piano has perhaps been the preeminent force in jazz in recent times, the saxophone arguably remains the music's clarion call: just a couple of notes from a sax can pull us into that familiar soundworld we call jazz. And some 178 years on from when Adolphe Sax first patented his game-changing instrument design in 1846, the saxophone continues to make headlines – not least with Shabaka Hutchings' much-publicised decision to stop playing one in favour of flutes – while also inspiring new generations of innovators. This issue offers a snapshot of the current state of play with two modern day titans – Chris Potter and Tim Garland – both at the top of their game and pushing themselves and their music into new territory with the saxophone front and centre. Jasmine Myra is one of several younger players (see also Maddy Coombs and Emily Masser in Taking Off) expressing their own highly personal voices on the instrument; and Mark Lockheart salutes one of the all-time greats, Wayne Shorter, in Turning Point. And the fact that Marshall Allen is still playing live with the Sun Ra Arkestra (albeit on an EVI now rather than an alto sax) as he turns 100 is testimony to the never-ending creativity the sound of the saxophone inspires.

Mike Flynn, Editor, *Jazzwise*

Chick Corea and Béla Fleck's final Duo recordings to be released on new album *Remembrance*

A new album entitled *Remembrance*, featuring the final recordings of the late piano luminary Chick Corea and multi-award winning banjo virtuoso Béla Fleck, is released on 10 May on the Thirty Tigers imprint. It's described as "a moving final document of the duo's deep creative and personal rapport which they first showcased on their 2007 Latin Grammy-winning *The Enchantment*.

Corea's death from cancer at age 79 in 2021, devastated the jazz world, and these recordings will be seen as an important addition to the pianist's musical legacy; they feature three previously unreleased Corea compositions as well as five short free improvisations, or 'impromptus', that Fleck has infused with written music.

Recorded both live in concert (on what was the duo's final tour in 2019) and via traded sound files in the height of the Covid pandemic, *Remembrance* runs the stylistic gamut: from Corea's unreleased tunes 'Enut Nital' (or 'Latin Tune', spelled backwards), and 'Continuance', an older work that resurfaced in the duo's setlist; to new Fleck compositions, such as 'The Otter Creek Incident' and 'Juno', a tribute to his son; through "clairvoyant interpretations" of Thelonious Monk and Domenico Scarlatti; to challenging exercises, such as Fleck's 'Small Potatoes' (which evokes Corea's unsung work in the jazz avant-garde).

"I know it sounds unlikely. But it really happened. Once upon a time, I played banjo in a duo with Chick Corea," says Fleck of his partnership with the piano icon. "I had been influenced by Chick's music since childhood, and I just feel so lucky to have played with him in such an intimate way, and to have gotten to know him so well. We pushed this duo to a new place before we ran out of time. There's a lot of great Corea [music] out there, and this is different."

Speaking back in 2015 about his unique relationship with Fleck, Corea said: "With Béla, our duet has become so simpatico, and comfortable – comfortable spiritually. And not meaning that we're not adventuring musically, but I do know that whatever we're going to do, [it] is going to be musical."

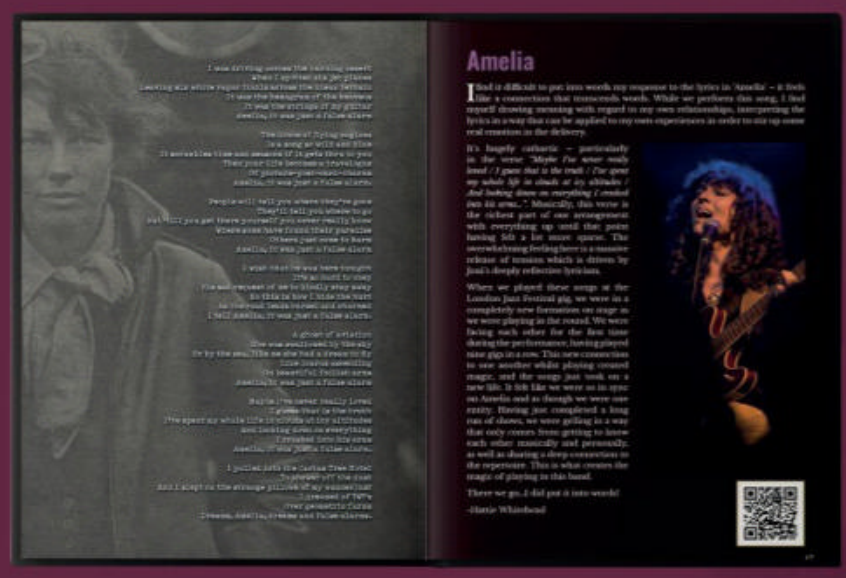
For more info visit www.belafleck.com/music#remembrance

Pete Oxley launches 'Look, Scan, Listen' distribution service

Look, Scan, Listen (LSL) sounds like a 1960s road safety campaign, but it's actually a new way of distributing music that combines "the ease of streaming with the analogue satisfaction of owning a vinyl album". LSL is an initiative undertaken by guitarist Pete Oxley and his business partner at The Spin jazz club, Stuart Miller, and it could earn musicians vastly more for their music than they presently get from Spotify. The idea is based on the premise that while many people no longer own a CD player, virtually everyone has a smartphone.

For £20-25, you can buy a printed booklet containing artwork, photographs and information about the music – and a QR code to stream the music. "The liner notes are even more comprehensive than you'd get with a vinyl album – the book's got 32 pages," explains Miller. "We're not trying to push against the tide, because streaming is here to stay. The problem is that musicians don't get a fair deal from it. With LSL, you're not taken to Soundcloud or somewhere else, it's just immediately streamed from our server, using our own software development to make it really elegant."

Enquiries to stuart@towpathproductions.com



BACK IN THE DAY...

Dubbed "the first psychedelic jazz group" by San Franciscan hippy promoter Chet Helms early in 1967, the Charles Lloyd Quartet were soaring stateside following the release of *Forest Flower*, which sold over a million copies, earned him *DownBeat's* 1967 Jazz Artist of The Year Award and made Miles Davis look distinctly like yesterday's man. Lloyd's highly adventurous young band, including Keith Jarrett, Jack DeJohnette and Ron McClure were shaking up jazz followers across America, Europe and even the Soviet Union and, significantly, attracting a growing new audience of counter-cultural music fans.

Now it was the UK's turn, and with the 'Summer of Love' in full flower the quartet made their UK debut with two shows at London's Queen Elizabeth Hall on 17 June 1967. Their forward-looking composition, mystic modal meditations and fire-breathing improvisation stood in stark musical contrast to elegant swing pianist Teddy Wilson, who played the Purcell Room next door two days earlier. Wilson was a much-lauded veteran of the Billie Holiday, Benny Goodman and Sarah Vaughan bands, and like Lloyd a strong supporter of social justice and civil rights causes, where he was dubbed the 'Marxist Mozart'.

Lloyd had first visited the UK with Cannonball Adderley Quintet in 1964, when they were the Musician's Union exchange act for The Beatles first US tour.. This time however he was fronting the most talked about new jazz group at a time of seismic change in contemporary music. In the following week's *Melody Maker*, Lloyd's concert was the lead review under the headline, 'Lloyd and the road to flower power', with critic Bob Houston concluding, "It's his superb compositions and often wonderful tenor that the fuss should be about: the 'psychedelic' wrapping will do a lot of good bringing people into the fold, but there's a very tangy jazz package underneath it all." A marketing trend that Atlantic records weren't slow to exploit with their wild, parent-baiting psychedelic advertisement for Lloyd's *Dream Weaver* and *Forest Flower* LPs, which appeared six pages later in the same issue. Shame Atlantic didn't have the budget to run it as a full-page ad and send the jazz police into a whistle-blowing frenzy!

Jon Newey

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NAME: Anmol Mohara

INSTRUMENTS: Drums and tabla

EXPERIENCE AND INFLUENCES: Anmol started playing drums and Eastern percussion instruments when he was eight years old. Already having the opportunity to work with Nicolas Meier, Antoine Fafard, Time Zone, Gareth Lockrane and Ben Waters, he regularly performs with his own band and is currently working on his debut album.

THIS FUTURE MOVER SAYS: "I see every style of the music as the same. There are so many crossovers in the devices and approaches used in different cultures and it's amazing how many different directions they can be taken in. What I love about jazz and improvisation is that it gives me so much freedom to express myself. I enjoy the interaction I have with other musicians when playing this music."

See Anmol Mohara play Future Movers Late Shows on 7-8 June led by Phil Meadows (alto sax) and featuring Lorenz Okello (piano/keys), Dom Howard (guitar) and Stan Woodward (bass), more at www.ronniescotts.co.uk

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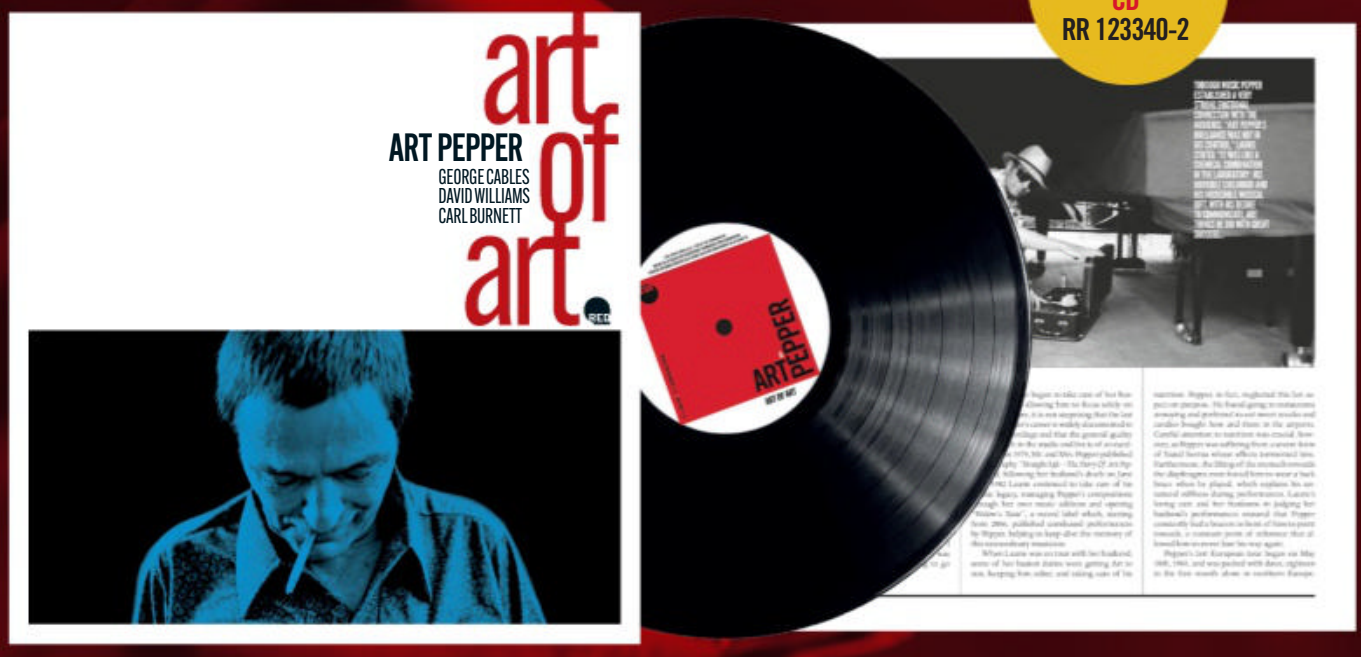

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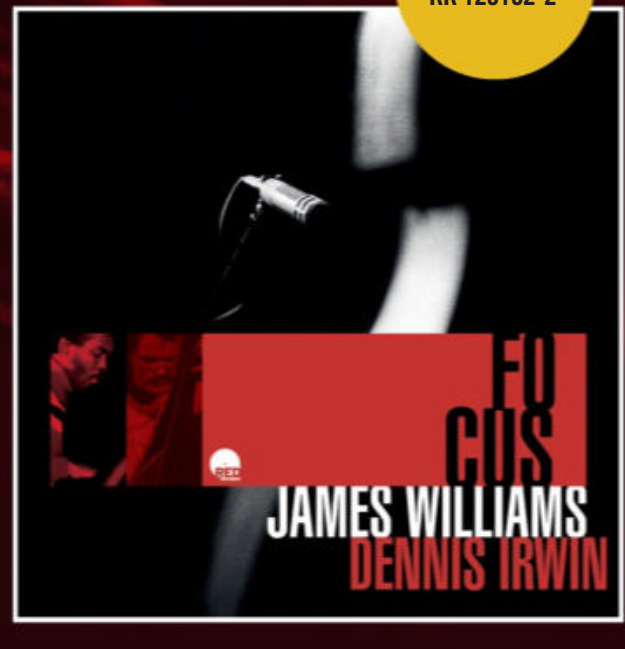

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The saxophonist selects the albums she can't live without

1 *Banned in New York* by Greg Osby (1998)
"I consider Greg as my main mentor who really broadened my approach to improvisation and composition. Greg always thinks outside the box and has a unique style which I love. The energy of this live album is amazing, the group is on fire, the compositions are killing and Greg sounds as if he came from another world. His lines, his sound and his feel are a big inspiration."

2 *Symphony of Psalms* by Igor Stravinsky/The CBS Symphony Orchestra (1973)
"Whenever I'm in a composing phase, this legendary work is always a source of great inspiration. It's timeless and ground-breaking. I always feel very small when I am listening to this work. It makes me cry, shiver and feel free; Stravinsky used many limitations for his writing which ultimately made his music sound extremely free, and it triggers my imagination to keep on composing and performing."

3 *Live in Europe 1967 – The Bootleg Series Vol.1* by Miles Davis Quintet (2011)
"Every time I hear these giants on this epic recording, they blow me away. Their collective improvisations, partly inspired by avant-garde musicians such as Cecil Taylor, makes it so vibrant and urgent. This musical interaction is the perfect example of how I want to make music. Wayne is one of my biggest heroes, who keeps on inspiring my musical, spiritual and personal journey."

4 *Préludes Books 1 & 2* by Claude Debussy/Youri Egorov (1984)
"For me, this music is some of the most beautiful, rich and deep music ever composed. The beauty of it can be overwhelming and with jazz, at times, I miss the energy to listen to it, but this always fits into my life at any given moment or mood I'm in. It's just perfect music."

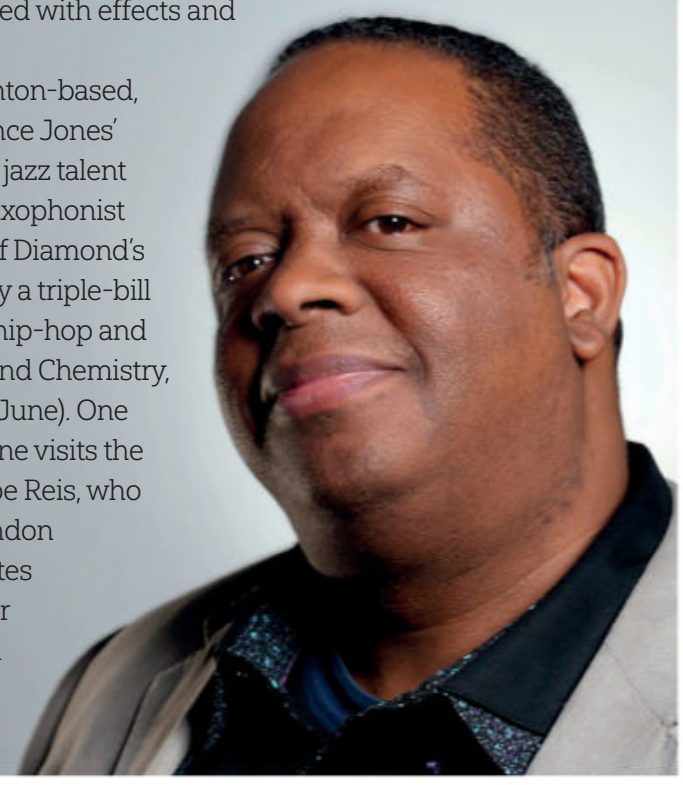
5 *Nothing Like The Sun* by Sting (1987)
"I had a huge crush on him when I was a teenager and still love this album. I still dream of playing with him one day. The soprano playing of Branford Marsalis had a big influence on my playing. Epic album."

Tineke Postma's latest album *Aria* is out now on Edition Records. See review on page 45

World Heart Beat heats up with Julian Joseph premiere and much more

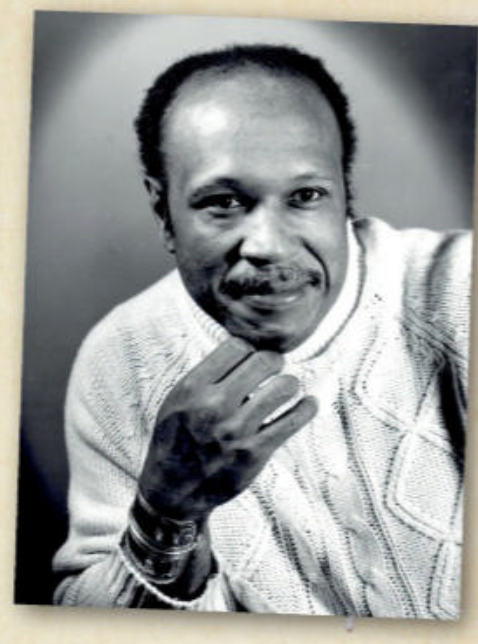
South London's World Heart Beat Music Academy and venue continues its eclectic programme of jazz events with two notable premieres and a wide selection of jazz artists from the UK, Europe and US. Things kick off with leading jazz violinist Tcha Limberger's 'Viper Club' band (10 May) mixing up gypsy jazz and swing; Jerome Etcheberry (trumpet), Dave Kelbie (rhythm guitar), and Sebastien Girardot (double bass) all feature.

Pianist Julian Joseph premieres his new 'Atmospheres In Audio Theatre' work (17 May): this is presented in surround sound courtesy of the venue's immersive d&b Soundscape speaker system. Joseph is joined by his new trio – Kaidi Akinnibi on saxophone, and Alok Verma on percussion. There's also an appearance by improvising violinist Rebekah Reid, who explores jazz repertoire combined with effects and live looping (31 May).



The summer line-up includes Brighton-based, Philadelphia born jazz flautist Lawrence Jones' Quartet (1 June); a triple-bill of young jazz talent including pianist Danny Piers' Trio, saxophonist Ruben Ross' 4tet, and trombonist Wilf Diamond's 4tet (all on 21 June). This is followed by a triple-bill encompassing jazz, funk, prog rock, hip-hop and more from emerging artists Compound Chemistry, Caytra and Sound-Anthropology (26 June). One of the stars of the Brazilian music scene visits the venue in the form of trombonist Joabe Reis, who performs here for the first time in London (1 July), and closing out this run of dates in frenetic Latin-jazz style is drummer Tristan Bank's high-calibre band with saxophonist Paul Booth (26 July).
www.worldheartbeat.org

55 YEARS AGO – Les McCann



It's often forgotten that the Montreux Jazz Festival began as a European talent-spotting competition, with among its earliest prize winners Dusko Goykovic (1967), John Surman, Jan Garbarek and Louis Stewart (all 1968). And if you believed the documentary *They All Came Out To Montreux*, the guest appearances of Charles Lloyd in 1967 or Nina Simone and Bill Evans the following year are unworthy of mention. The impression given is that it all started with the late Les McCann (1935-2003) and Eddie Harris in June 1969.

Their resultant album *Swiss Movement* is a fascinating period piece, and it's basically McCann's set. (Eddie Harris was a separate act with his quartet including Billy Hart, and the idea of him sitting in with Les was only mooted the day before.) You can hear McCann guiding Eddie through the arrangements and, as well as a track being left off – only to be added for the 30th anniversary reissue – the running order was changed, with 'Compared To What' the closing number (and the only vocal) being promoted to the opening slot.

Les previously recorded the song on his final Limelight album, with a rather stilted vocal, no instrumental interludes and slightly too fast. At Montreux, however, his long trio introduction takes one whole minute to arrive at the chosen key and another minute with Eddie joining in, before he addresses Gene McDaniels' sardonic protest lyric. Here it all takes off, and the 16-bar interludes between verses find Harris and expatriate trumpeter Benny Bailey unashamedly hamming it up. McCann's backings are rudimentary in the best sense, and the unstoppable groove of drummer Donald Dean, marking every single beat except in the suspenseful breaks, is key to the end result. **Brian Priestley**

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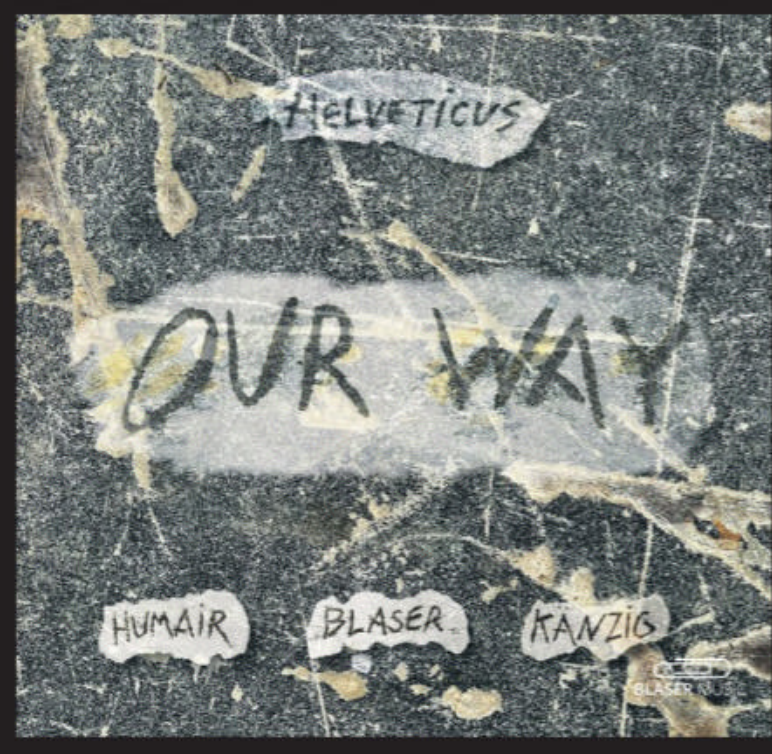

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Taking the late Trane...

This April saw BBC Radio 3 launch a new nightly weekday show, '*Round Midnight*, hosted by renowned UK saxophonist and broadcaster **Soweto Kinch**. With the show already hitting its stride, **Mike Flynn** spoke to the presenter about the possibilities of this new nationwide jazz programme

Congratulations on the new show – I've really enjoyed all the episodes I've listened to so far. You're an experienced broadcaster, but it must be slightly daunting doing a show five nights a week?

Thankfully, I'm not completely alone, there's a team of producers with their ears to these jazz streets. It's a hefty number of shows, but I'm really grateful that we've got a such a big platform. We're not constrained by having to cram all the diversity and range of the jazz scene into the usual tiny slot.

I like the fact that you've been looking both backward and forwards in terms of the music you're playing – do you feel this is an opportunity to educate your audience to some of the less obvious corners of the music?

Absolutely, and also introducing audiences to one of the most magical paradoxes of our music. Some of the most forward thinking, revolutionary musical ideas were codified by jazz musicians over 70-80 years ago – and they still sound ahead of the curve. Similarly, contemporary musicians often stand out from the pack, mining a musical heritage much older than themselves – playing with that history and gravity behind them. It's like we simultaneously reach into past and future.

I also get the sense that you're showing just how accessible even more avant-garde jazz can be – it's all branches off the same sonic tree right?

Indeed! It's so important to collapse some of the more rigid boundaries within jazz – 'trad', 'bop', 'avant garde' *et cetera*. Musicians don't often think of themselves as a sub-genre. One of the things I'm most excited to share is artists turning up in unexpected contexts – David Sanborn studying free with Roscoe Mitchell, or Joe Harriott's recording with Chris Barber!

What are the challenges of broadcasting in a later slot 'Round Midnight?

We're less likely to attract the casual listener with the late slot. However, the fact its available on BBC Sounds, and of course can be heard internationally, is really exciting. Quite a few people have hit me up to say '*Round Midnight* is essential morning jog, or dog walk listening.

You're also introducing a lot of younger musicians – Zara McFarlane, Nubya, Cassie, Fergus McCreadie – to the Radio 3 audience – is this in part a result of Ezra Collective's Mercury Prize win, i.e. a feeling that jazz needs to reach out beyond its traditional (older) demographic?

Thankfully, it is already reaching beyond its 'traditional demographic' with the Mercury Prize win, new venues and festivals. '*Round Midnight* lets us explore how it's not so dissimilar from the jazz which preceded it – and to draw the connecting threads. One of the features I'm most proud of is 4/4, where Cassie Kinoshi and Nubya Garcia have celebrated the artists and composers that inspired them. Nothing exists in a vacuum, and I'm excited this show draws the links between today's artists and preceding generations.

Who else can we expect to hear from in forthcoming episodes?

We have long-form interviews, live sessions and guest curated segments. I really want to convey the dynamism of the scene currently. It's filled with composers and improvisers who are really eloquent about the music they make and the reasoning behind it.

Are we likely to hear live recordings from jazz festivals in the future?

Oh yes! Xhosa Cole's incredible performance at the InnTone Festival in Austria just aired, and we're looking forward to many more. It's always a pleasure to hear jazz musicians taking risks, and letting lose with longer solos.

Will 'Round Midnight be broadcasting live from the opening night of any festivals?

I really hope so. I'll put a special request in – that was my free gig pass! But seriously, it's been a great relationship that's brought a lot of radio listeners to live shows, and vice versa. We're definitely planning on extending this with the Latitude Festival and others.

Finally, what's exciting you most about the current jazz scene and are there any upcoming albums or events you're looking forward to later in the year?

Maybe it's my drama-loving personality, but I find the often polarising opinions about 'new jazz' exciting. It's a chance to break with convention, and to fight for elements of the 'heritage' we believe are essential. Apparent ructions with tradition have been happening for over a century, often followed by a new golden age. I'm excited to hear the new music that technology and collapsing national borders will bring in the near future. I personally can't wait to hear Shabaka's new project in full, and whatever Braxton Cook and Immanuel Wilkins do next. There's a lot more to come from the likes of Sultan Stevenson, Emma Rawicz, Fergus McCreadie and Xhosa Cole. I'm honoured to have front row seats!

***'Round Midnight* with Soweto Kinch (a Folded Wing production for BBC Radio 3) is broadcast weeknights from 11.30pm-12.30am, and is also available on BBC Sounds**

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Charting the Jazz Message/June 2024

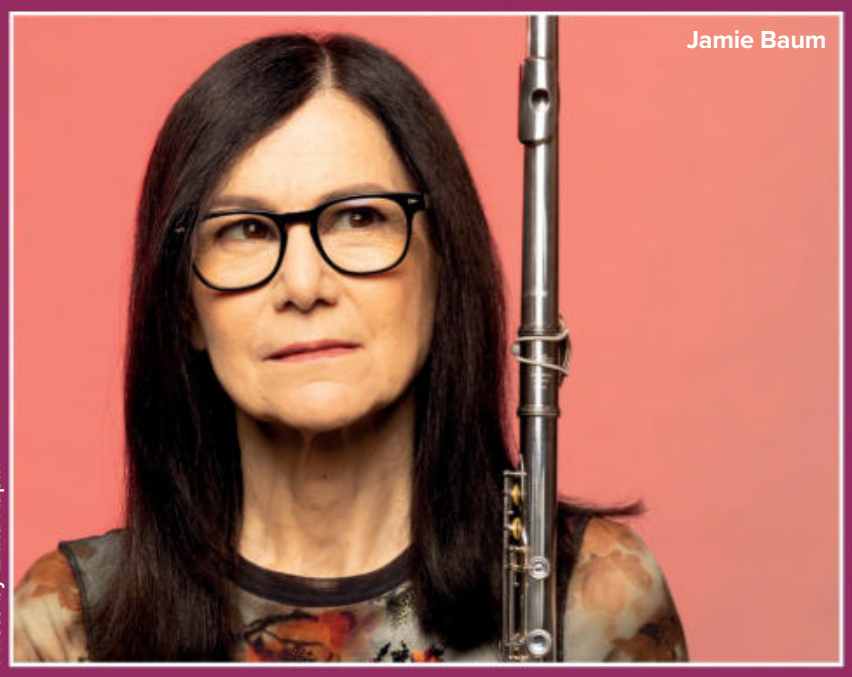
Jamie Baum

Photo by Erika Kapin

The *Jazzwise* Chart

What's currently spinning on the Jazzwise team's stereos...

1 Jamie Baum What Times Are These *Sunnyside*
2 Strictly Smokin' Big Band Strictly Smokin' & Friends *Jazz Sounds*
3 Max Light Chaotic Neutral *www.maxlight.bandcamp.com*
4 Black Art Jazz Collective Truth to Power *High Note*
5 Shuteen Erdenebaatar Quartet Rising Sun *Motéma*
6 Jackie McLean One Step Beyond *Blue Note*
7 Gary Husband Songs of Love and Solace *BFD*
8 Fay Victor & Herbie Nichols Sung Life Is Funny That Way *TAO Forms*
9 Joonas Haavisto/Kestutis Vaiginis Moon Bridge *Eight Islands Records*
10 Christian McBride/Edgar Meyer But Who's Going To Play The Melody? *Mack Avenue*

SOUND RECORDS

Jazz gems from the Stroud vinyl emporium www.facebook.com/soundstroud

1 Bobby Hutcherson Happenings *Blue Note*
2 Amirtha Kidambi Elder Ones *We Jazz*
3 Atras Del Cosmos Cold Drinks, Hot Dreams *Blank Forms*
4 Andre 3000 New Blue *Sun Epic*
5 Harold Land The Fox *Contemporary*
6 Herbie Hancock Speak Like A Child *Blue Note*
7 Various Artists Disques Debs International Volume 1 *Strut*
8 Jonathan Backstrom Quartet Jonathan Backstrom Quartet *We Jazz*
9 Chico Hamilton The Dealer *Impulse!*
10 Esbjörn Svensson Solo Home.S *ACT*

SOMETHIN' ELSE

Jez Nelson Sundays at 10pm on Jazz FM

1 Jihye Lee Orchestra Infinite Connections *Motéma*
2 Fergus McCreadie Stream *Edition*
3 David Murray Quartet Francesca *Intakt*
4 Conrad Herwig The Latin Side of McCoy Tyner *Savant*
5 Sun Ra Inside The Light World: Sun Ra Meets The OVC *Strut*
6 Magnus Öström & Dan Berglund e.s.t 30 *ACT Music*
7 Nduduzo Makhathini uNomkhubulwane *Blue Note*
8 Nicole Grover Plays *Savant*
9 Tom Skinner Voices of Bishara Live *International Anthem*
10 Ron Miles Old Main Chapel *Blue Note*

EUROPEAN JAZZ MEDIA

Selected by Europe's leading jazz media

1 Olivier Le Goas Sunland *Challenge*
2 Kristjan Randalu Schumann Dichterliebe *Berlin Classics*
3 Mario Costa Chromosome *Clean Feed*
4 Tim Garland Moment Of Departure *Ubuntu Music*
5 Ziemia Feat. Irek Wojtczak Warming / Melting *Audio Cave*
6 Tomasz Dabrowski And The Individual Beings Better *April*
7 Anna Roemer Blåregn *self-released*
8 Louis Matute Small Variations Of The Previous Day *Neuklang*
9 Shabaka Hutchings Perceive Its Beauty, Acknowledge Its Grace *Impulse!*
10 Jasper Høiby's 3 Elements Like Water *Edition*

UNION MUSIC

Pre-loved and new jazz gems from the Lewes vinyl lovers

1 Art Pepper Art Of Art *Red Records*
2 Bill Evans Everybody Digs Bill Evans (Mono) *Riverside/OJC/Craft Recordings*
3 Pharoah Sanders Harvest Time *Luaka Bop 7"*
4 Elaine Brown Seize The Day *Soulgramma*
5 Kenny Dorham This is The Moment *New Land*
6 Charles Mingus Reincarnations *Candid*
7 Brother Jack McDuff Ain't No Sunshine *Reel To Real*
8 Shelly Manne Jazz From Pacific North West *Reel To Real*
9 Sister Rosetta Tharpe Live in France *Elemental*
10 Sun Ra At The Showcase Live in Chicago *Jazz Detective*

GUEST CHART: JASMINE MYRA

Spiritual jazz selections from the alto sax ace

1 Makaya McCraven In These Times *International Anthem/Nonesuch*
2 Alabaster DePlume GOLD *International Anthem*
3 Mos Def Black on Both Sides *Rawkus*
4 Portico Quartet Monument *Gondwana*
5 Ólafur Arnalds some kind of peace *Mercury KX*
6 Andy Shauf The Bearer of Bad News *Tender Loving Empire and Party Damage*
7 Felbm Tape 2 *Soundway*
8 Floating Points Elaenia *Pluto*
9 Jake Xerxes Fussell Good and Green Again *Paradise of Bachelors*
10 Bonobo Migration *Ninja Tune*

PRESTO MUSIC

The store and streaming service that gets jazz to your door... www.prestomusic.com/jazz

1 Jasmine Myra Rising *Gondwana*
2 Dan Coulthurst Babyteeth *Ubuntu Music*
3 Bryony Jarman-Pinto Below Dawn *Tru Thoughts*
4 Tony Kofi & Ian Shaw An Adventurous Dream *PX Records*
5 Sonny Rollins A Night at the Village Vanguard: The Complete Masters *Blue Note*
6 Schlippenbach Trio First Recordings *Trost*
7 Dawda Jobarteh/Stefan Pasborg Live in Turku *April Records*
8 Louis Moholo Viva La Black *Ogun*
9 Alexander Hawkins & Sofia Jernberg Musho *Intakt*
10 [Ahmed] Giant Beauty *Fönstre*

THE BLUEPRINT

Chris Philips' maraud through new jazz heat grooves and free sounds

1 Alina Bzhezhinska & Toni Kofi Altera Vita *BBE Music*
2 Bill Frisell Orchestras *Blue Note*
3 Jasper Høiby's 3Elements Like Water *Edition*
4 Nicole Glover Plays *Savant*
5 Magnus Öström & Dan Berglund e.s.t 30 *ACT Music*
6 David Murray Quartet Francesca *Intakt*
7 Pando Pando Pando Pando *Not Applicable*
8 Ronnie April Ronnie April's Positive Energy Volume 1 *Jazz Room*
9 Andy Milne & Unison Time Will Tell *Sunnyside*
10 Cannonball Adderley Burnin' in Bordeaux-Live in France 1969 *Elemental Music*

JAZZ FM

Essential sounds from Jazz FM on DAB www.jazzfm.com

1 Bill Laurance & The Untold Orchestra Bloom *ACT Music*
2 Pat Metheny MoonDial *BMG/Modern Recordings*
3 Zara McFarlane Sweet Whispers *K7*
4 Hiatus Kaiyote Love Heart Cheat Code *Brainfeeder*
5 Jo Harrop The Path Of A Tear *Lateralize Records*
6 Nova Vida Ritmo Da Vida *CBI Recordings*
7 Lizz Wright Shadow *Blues & Greens*
8 Sefi Zeisling The Librarian' *Tru Thoughts*
9 Kamasi Washington Fearless Movement *Young*
10 Nubiyan Twist Find Your Flame *K7*

THE CUTTING EDGE

Mike Chadwick selects hot new releases www.soulandjazz.com

1 Nik Bärtsch & Ronin Rhythm Clan Moonday EP *nikbaertsch.bandcamp.com*
2 Jeremy Pelt Tomorrow's Another Day *High Note*
3 Goran Kajfes Tropiques Tell Us *We Jazz*
4 Evgeny Pobozhiy Orchestra Stream *Evgeny Pobozhiy Music*
5 Nir Felder III *La Reserve*
6 Jasper Hoiby's 3 Elements Like Water *Edition*
7 The Aristocrats Duck *Boing*
8 Andreas Hourdakis Report to Keftiu *Jazz by Bolero*
9 Jihye Lee Orchestra Infinite Connections *Motéma*
10 Finn Rees Dawn is a Melody *Mr Bongo*

Head of Spin: Pete Oxley

Pulling post-gig pints with US band Charged Particles

Emma Rawicz and Immy Churchill

Randy Brecker

Rob Luft and Dave O'Higgins

THE SPIN: KEEPING OXFORD'S JAZZ WHEELS TURNING

PETER JONES finds the club founded 25 years ago by Pete Oxley in the rudest of health

It may only be a mile and a half down the road, but Botley, just west of Oxford, feels a world away from the city's dreaming spires. Hidden away at the back of an industrial estate near the ring road, Tap Social Movement looks, on the face of it, like the last place you'd want to go for a night out. But then the door opens into a Boho Wonderland: funky decor, craft beers, a big welcoming bar with comfortable chairs (including a Chesterfield sofa), a good-sized performance area, low lighting - in short, a cool but cosy vibe.

This is the home of The Spin, a jazz club now celebrating its 25th anniversary. Founded in 1999 by guitarist Pete Oxley, it's become so successful that most gigs now sell out in advance. Musicians love it – not least because they get paid the very next day, rather than endure an increasingly common three-week delay.

The Spin hasn't always been where it is now. When Oxley started the club with drummer Mark Doffman and bassist Raph Mizraki, it was in an upstairs room at the Wheatsheaf pub in the city centre: "We just wanted somewhere to play every Thursday. Never mind if nobody came." But to be on the safe side, he booked guitarist John Etheridge for the first gig.

"We made up some nice arty black-and-white posters, A1 size, and went round the whole of Oxford at two in the morning putting them up with wallpaper paste, and slapped them up on dead window-fronts. And we did this two or three times a week, getting massive exposure."

Come the first night, the crowd was a hundred strong, although subsequent audiences were more modest. The monthly formula for the next 20 years was: three gigs with a house band and a guest, and then a fourth gig with a band.

As time went on, they booked Tim Garland, fresh from his stint with Chick Corea, along with drummer Jeff Ballard; The Impossible Gentlemen, led by Gwilym Simcock and Mike Walker. The word reached America: guitarist Jonathan Kreisberg visited, as did Pat Metheny's bassist Steve Rodby and Michael Brecker's drummer Adam Nussbaum. The club was shortlisted three times for Best Venue in the Parliamentary Jazz Awards without success; but at the fourth attempt they finally triumphed.

> ***"We just wanted somewhere to play every Thursday. Never mind if nobody came..."***

But scroll forward a couple of decades, and things had become a little stale. Both Doffman and Mizraki left, leaving Oxley to run it on his own: "That was really quite a lot of work, so when lockdown came, my first reaction was, great - a season off!" Thanks to the pandemic, one year off turned into two, then one day Pete's partner Ute was walking along the Oxford canal when she saw a narrowboat with a huge banner reading, 'Towpath Productions - Moving Music'. The owner was tech entrepreneur Stuart Miller, who had decided to pay musicians to entertain the public by performing on deck as the boat cruised up and down the canal. It led to a phone conversation between Stuart and Pete: "Forty-five minutes later, Stuart had become my partner in running The Spin, such was my confidence in the way he spoke. And then we met up..."

Around that time, the owner of The Wheatsheaf decided to convert it into student flats. The Spin needed a new home.

Fortunately, Miller had recently sold his company, which left him with a lot of time on his hands.

"I was really looking for something else to do. I didn't want to do another business startup," he says. "I used to go to The Spin, because I love jazz, but I didn't know that Pete was in a hiatus with the club."

For a while they tried different locations, including a local gin distillery, expecting another lockdown to be announced at any moment. Says Oxley: "We didn't announce a season ahead, because we didn't want to get into a muddle with forward selling of tickets, but we just kept selling out." They realised this was because they were only advertising one gig at a time, rather than a long list of forthcoming attractions, from which potential audience members might choose perhaps one. It's a strategy that other jazz venues might do well to copy. As Miller says: "If you just put one gig up at a time, people think, Well, I'd better just go to that one."

And so The Spin goes from strength to strength, with a second monthly venue just opened in the north Oxford suburb of Summertown. Watch this space: the story ain't over yet...

Photos: courtesy Pete Oxley

Albert 'Tootie' Heath:
31/5/1935 – 3/4/2024

Nine years younger than his saxophonist brother Jimmy Heath, and 12 years younger than his other sibling, bassist Percy, Philadelphia-born drummer Albert 'Tootie' Heath had every bit as distinguished a career as his brothers.

Growing up in his hometown, he was playing with Bobby Timmons, John Coltrane and Shirley Scott before he was into his twenties. He worked with trumpeter and composer Cal Massey's band there (Cal had previously worked with Jimmy Heath) and Tootie told me that: "I grew up listening to Jimmy. Percy'd gone to New York by the time I got into music, but Jimmy was a strong influence and my main teacher – not as a drummer – but as a musician."

He followed his brothers to New York in 1957, and, aged 22, his first significant recording was the eponymous Prestige album *John Coltrane*. From there he went on to record with numerous other stars: J. J. Johnson, the Benny Golson/Art Farmer Jazztet, and Cedar Walton. He was also talent-spotted by Riverside producer Orrin Keepnews, and in 1960 he took part on the sessions for *The Incredible Jazz guitar of Wes Montgomery*. "I'd never played with him before," he told me, "but Orrin would put together these groups of different configurations of instrumentalists and personalities, and amid all of that, I was able to record with Wes."

After a prolific recording and playing career in New York, he moved to Scandinavia for three years from 1965, thereafter dividing his time between Europe and the USA, until he settled in California in 1976.

He saw his European years as a hugely important time: "I got to play with older people, like Don Byas and other 'exiles'. I'd never got the chance to meet him in the States, but then I worked with him, and with Ben Webster, Stuff Smith, Johnny Griffin, and, of course, Dexter Gordon. I'd say coming to Europe was a wonderful opportunity and a very significant educational experience. One of the most important parts of my career."

In 1975, he joined the Heath Brothers band, with Percy and Jimmy, plus pianist Stanley Cowell. Following a full-time period together, this became a more occasional occupation, but the band continued for many years, their final album *As We Were Saying* (1997) containing the excellent trio track by the three of them: 'South Filthy'. Meanwhile, he played for a veritable who's who of great musicians, including Herbie Hancock (*Fat Albert Rotund*a and *The Prisoner*), Tete Montoliu and Art Farmer.

Although he took periods away from music, he continued to work well into the 21st Century, and two of his most rewarding more recent albums are *Tootie's Tempo* (2013) and *Philadelphia Beat* (2015) with Ethan Iverson and Ben Street, covering a repertoire that stretches from James P Johnson to Lalo Schifrin, mirroring Tootie's own wide-ranging interest in all eras and styles of jazz.

Alyn Shipton

Casey Benjamin:
10/10/1978 – 31/3/2024

Global audiences will remember saxophonist Casey Benjamin, who has died at the age of 45, as one of the key members of pianist Robert Glasper's Experiment band. With his crimson braids and lab tech glasses he was akin to a super-hip sci-fi character, but instead of wielding a ray gun, the horn player had a not-so-secret weapon in the shape of a vocoder. Along with a bank of effects and keyboard Benjamin used it to add to the decidedly futuristic slant of 2012's Grammy winning and chart smashing album *Black Radio* and 2013's *Black Radio 2*, two epochal unions of neo-soul, hip-hop and jazz.

The explicitly synthetic sound Benjamin produced was in the lineage of Herbie Hancock's disco-fusion heyday, and it gelled powerfully with Glasper's material. That said, Benjamin's alto sax, which would liberally crunch through waves of distortion, brought to mind another great innovator, Eddie Harris. Machine enhanced or not, Benjamin was a deeply soulful player who had the chops to sustain lengthy, climactic solos that added to the electricity levels of any group he appeared with.

And there were many. Born in Jamaica, New York and educated at the New School in Manhattan, the start of his association with Glasper, Benjamin also worked with jazz luminaries Roy Hargrove, Stefon Harris, Derrick Hodge, Victor Bailey and Kris Bowers. Yet Benjamin's interest in soul, R&B and hip-hop also led to sessions with singers such as Bilal, John Legend and Mary J.Blige and rappers Q-Tip, Nas and Mos Def. The saxophonist leaves a CV that is stylistically broad, as befits an open mind.

For the most part Benjamin was the ubiquitous A-list sideman who moved like a free spirit through many areas of contemporary black music and built a reputation for high standards of performance regardless of the context in which he was heard. Having said that, he also co-led with vocalist Nicky Guiland the funk-pop-rock group HEAVy, and the band's 2021 EP *Hand In Hand* was a pleasingly off-the-wall affair that made clear how effectively Benjamin could channel his improvisatory skills into the kind of concise, taut, smartly constructed songs that were easy on the ear but by no means lacking in depth. Benjamin's passing at such a young age leaves a question mark over what he could have gone on to achieve, yet his discography ensures a lasting legacy. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Michael Cuscuna: 20/09/1948 – 20/4/2024

The name of Michael Cuscuna should be very familiar to album collectors, especially those who read the small-print credits. When I first interviewed him in 1985, he estimated he'd been involved with some 600 releases already, a figure that was rapidly dwarfed. His reputation was such that, the following year, Courtney Pine requested Michael as producer of his debut album.

Born and raised in Connecticut, he caught the jazz bug early, and by his mid-teens was hearing top-drawer bands in New York City. Having first been fascinated by the drums, Michael then studied saxophone, and even played a gig with a 'businessman's-bounce' dance-band, before concentrating on listening to records.

In his early 20s he landed jobs playing progressive rock on a couple of radio stations - one of which led to his first album production *Buddy And The Juniors* (featuring Buddy Guy with Junior Wells and pianist Junior Mance, for the Blue Thumb label). But, when the station introduced a centralised playlist, he resigned and looked for work in the record industry.

A period with Atlantic, where he produced the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Dave Brubeck, led to productions for Arista/Freedom of both Anthony Braxton and Henry Threadgill. But the key affiliation was being hired by Blue Note's Charlie Lourie in the mid-1970s to pursue his stratagem of finding previously unissued sessions, which became particularly popular in Japan.

In the early 1980s Lourie and Cuscuna, by then both out of work, badgered EMI executives with daily phone calls about leasing some Blue Note material in short print-runs for sale by mail-order to collectors who wanted properly documented, well packaged reissues.

Thus was born the Mosaic label, which over 40 years has produced 180 sets and is perhaps Cuscuna's most notable legacy (Lourie died prematurely in 2001). The distinctive black boxes and their enclosed booklets reflect the passionate attention to detail of a self-proclaimed "typical Virgo".

Notable early reissues featured Monk, Mingus, Sidney Bechet, Stan Kenton, Ellington, Basie - you name them - and they followed up with Lee Morgan, Jackie McLean, MJQ and many more. All these limited editions go out of print, of course, and then fetch high prices secondhand.

Michael was well placed to be of use when Blue Note itself was relaunched in 1985 under Bruce Lundvall who, initially without even a contract, gave him project after project. As well as producing their initial NYC Town Hall concert, Cuscuna helped to run the following year's Mount Fuji jazz festival. He also supervised numerous new studio sessions by such as Dianne Reeves, McCoy Tyner, John Scofield and (for EMI's Capitol label) Lou Rawls, while continuing his interest in archive material (including unissued Coltrane and Ayler for Impulse! Records). When Roulette became part of EMI, he found previously unheard Bud Powell, and he masterminded the definitive sets of Miles on Columbia, a joint venture with Mosaic who released the vinyl versions.

It's not universally the case that producers are beloved by the jazz musicians whom they record, but many big names were also personal friends of Cuscuna. No doubt his famously dry wit played a part in this. He once asked me what I thought of a newly published jazz biography and, when I began a hesitant reply with "Well...", he immediately said "Yes, quite". For collectors of video, it's worth noting he has a one-line bit-part in the movie *Round Midnight* - as the session producer about to record Dexter Gordon, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock *et al.*

He will be remembered, both by colleagues and those who saw his name in the small print, as a dedicated and determined documenter of the jazz journey. **Brian Priestley**

NEWS IN BRIEF

NEW REGENCY ORCHESTRA LAUNCH NEW ALBUM AT SCALA

The barnstorming 18-Piece Afro-Cuban jazz ensemble, the New Regency Orchestra (NRO), will headline Scala in King's Cross on Thursday 27 June to launch their eponymous debut album. Released on 14 June via Mr Bongo the NRO's LP puts classic Latin jazz through a 21st century London filter, drawing on the sounds of 1950s René Hernandez and Tito Puente, through to the 1970s salsa of Rafael Labasta and Orlando Marin, and the latinised bebop of legends such as Dizzy Gillespie and Chico O'Farrill. The band includes a talent packed line-up of leading UK jazz musicians (such as saxophonist George Crowley and trombonist Rosie Turton) alongside a troupe of latin drummers, percussionists and dancers. **For more info visit www.scala.co.uk/events/new-regency-orchestra/**

OGUN TO REISSUE LIVE GEMS FROM ELTON DEAN'S UNLIMITED SAXOPHONE COMPANY

Two live albums by the late great Soft Machine saxophonist Elton Dean's short lived Unlimited Saxophone Company, featuring a stellar assembly of some of the most progressive sax players of the time, are set to be reissued on the Ogun label. Only ever performing three concerts – 7 May 1989 at the Community Centre, London (London Jazz Saxophone Festival); 5 April 1991 at the Vortex, London; and the May edition of the Europa Jazz Festival, Le Mans 1991 – the first of these was recorded and released on Ogun in 1990, and is now reissued on 24 May. The last was filmed by Phillipe Renaud, and as this music is so rare the label has decided to have the sound from that concert mastered and offer it as a download with the CD reissue. The newly packaged album also includes new sleeve notes and photos. **For more info visit www.ogunrecording.co.uk/releases/**

ARTHUR VEROCAI AND NU CIVILISATION ORCHESTRA HEAD TO BARBICAN

Brazilian composer, singer, and producer Arthur Verocai makes his first-ever UK performance of his seminal eponymous 1972 album for a special show with the Nu Civilisation Orchestra (NCO) backing him at London's Barbican on 28 June. Formed in 2008 by Artistic Director and co-founder of Tomorrow's Warriors, Gary Crosby OBE, and led by musical director Ben Burrell, the NCO orchestra is earning a reputation as a shapeshifting, cutting edge ensemble not bound by genre or size, here metamorphosing into a large Latin jazz ensmble. **For more info visit www.barbican.org.uk/whats-on/**

PICTURES PERFECT

From hyperactive anime to an in-depth ECM documentary, **Selwyn Harris** harvests a bumper crop of new jazz-related movie and streaming releases

Max Roach in *The Drum Also Waltzes*

Tired of seeing jazz musicians portrayed on the screen as reckless, tortured geniuses with bad habits while the music itself is little more than a sideshow?

A huge welcome then, to a film that takes an entirely different approach. It comes from a most unlikely source. Japanese anime ***Blue Giant*** (available on Apple TV+ and DVD/Blu-ray), directed by Yuzuru Tachikawa, is purely fictional but digs deeper than most movies into the heart of jazz and the effect it can have on true believers. What's impressive is the accent here is on a new jazz generation. Set in Tokyo, it's about a small-town teenager Dai Miyamoto who aims to be the best jazz saxophonist in the world. An untutored instinctive player who never stops practising, he relocates to Tokyo and hangs fast to his ideals on his way to the top.

> ***"Hyper-expressive, flashing multi-coloured graphics come bursting out of the screen and vividly mirror the visceral effects of the music"***

The hyper-expressive, flashing multi-coloured graphics come bursting out of the screen and vividly mirror the visceral effects of the music with original soundtrack written by native virtuoso star pianist Hiromi Uehara. It has Hiromi's exuberant signature from easy-going funky bop-Latin moods through to fiery classical-jazz pyrotechnics with burning sax solos – a version of Trane's 'Impressions' included – ghosted by Tomoaki Baba. A jazz movie about jazz? Who'd have thought...

Adult-animation also aims effectively at docu-drama with Fernando Trueba and Javier Mariscal's ***They Shot the Piano Player*** (the title riffing on François Truffaut's *Nouvelle Vague* classic) recently released on Sony Pictures

Stills from *Blue Giant* (below left) and *Music for Black Pigeons* (below right).

Classics. Renowned for Oscar-nominated Afro-Cuban jazz animated romance feature *Chico and Rita* (2010), the filmmakers' more rudimentary, cooler graphic style (compared to anime) is a perfect fit for a gently melancholy film that centres on a New York journalist's investigation into the mysterious disappearance in Argentina of cult samba jazz pianist Francisco Tenorio Jr, presumed murdered in 1976 by the political dictatorship.

Actor and jazz pianist Jeff Goldblum's voiceover is as super-chilled as the comprehensive Brazilian soundtrack, and interviews with a cartoon João Gilberto, Caetano Veloso and Milton Nascimento and others build a profile of a genuine enigma.

Jørgen Leth and Andreas Koefoed's ***Music for Black Pigeons*** was magically edited down from 14 years of accumulated footage, and tracks the everyday working lives and creative processes of a cross-generation pool of high-profile international jazz musicians during a period of making recordings by Danish guitarist-composer Jacob Bro for the ECM label. The intimacy of the fly-on-the-wall camerawork is sometimes almost too close for comfort, but that's how it should be, and fits seamlessly alongside refreshingly truth-seeking interviews with none of the glib adulation featured in other documentaries. Though it's not as serious as it sounds.

"Jeff Goldblum's voiceover is as chilled as the comprehensive Brazilian soundtrack"

It's amusing to watch tough old-schoolers Lee Konitz and Paul Motian mingle with such mild-mannered, studious types as Craig Taborn and Thomas Morgan. Yet all barriers related to age, culture and identity are instantly dissolved once the red light comes on. Lee Konitz's alto sax is a heavenly match for the bittersweet, yearningly enigmatic aspects of Bro's music, yet Konitz ponders during the film on whether he really likes the music or not.

No spoilers on the meaning of the film title, just to say it makes for a hilarious conclusion to Konitz' sense of bemusement. The film is dedicated to the passing of Konitz, Paul Motian, Jon Christensen, and Tomasz Stańko. Its poignant end sequence is artfully edited: Bro walks through a park as does Konitz but in a previous time period; he then disappears behind some trees as Bro arrives at the sax legend's memorial stone. (The 2-LP soundtrack is released on Jacob Bro's Loveland label).

Another similarly-styled *vérité* documentary, by British filmmaker Tom Parsons, is ***Revelations in Small Steps*** which tells the idiosyncratic story of London-based jazz trumpeter Byron Wallen and his quartet Indigo. The band gradually incubates in Wallen's mindscape through a personal journey of sonic discovery that features drummer John Stevens' workshops, Gnawa griots in Morocco through to the evolution of Wallen's tight-knit camaraderie with Tom Skinner, Tony Kofi and Larry Bartley. This lovingly-produced, warm homespun documentary shines a necessary light on an easily forgotten gem of the post-millennial Brit jazz scene. (the DVD's available on Twilight Jaguar/Bandcamp).

Netflix-produced documentary ***American Symphony***, is also fly-on-the-wall, but with a dramatic narrative arc. On the day of high-flying New Orleans pianist-composer Jon Batiste's nomination for 11 Oscars (of which he won a mere five) his wife, the writer Suleika Jaouad, is starting chemotherapy. Joy is always at some level clothed in pain as the score composer and inspiration for the central figure in 2020's Disney/Pixar animation *Soul* prepares his ultra-ambitious *American Symphony* at Carnegie Hall in September of 2022. The music itself seems an oddly sprawling, derivative potpourri of kitchen-sink Americana, but the film boasts some genuinely memorable scenes. With a charismatic and evangelical presence onstage, we get to imagine the mental stress behind Batiste's wide smile as he puts his fame in perspective as the harsh reality of domestic life bites hard.

Your bog-standard cradle-to-grave posthumous documentary can still breathe new life into its subjects' legacies if there's a personal touch. Director Sam Pollard's late 2023 PBS-documentary broadcast ***The Drum Also Waltzes,*** marking the centenary of Max Roach's birth, zooms in on the seminal bop drummer's engagement with civil rights protest and his African heritage. Filming started as far back as 1987, so there's exclusive footage of Roach besides classic archive material of significant relationships with Clifford Brown and Abbey Lincoln. It reveals how Roach was consumed by an inner rage - one of his sons recalls him saying, "if I hadn't have had drums I would have picked up guns" - and his leaning to African-inspired sonic experimentation with excellent footage of his late-period percussion ensemble M'Boom. It's a timely reminder of the impact of a jazz icon who deserves to grab a few more headlines.

A double vision...

Singer and saxophonist **Emily Masser** may still be studying at the Guildhall but she's already a stand out talent fusing two disciplines into a singular style. **Alyn Shipton** spoke to her about her fast-developing skills as both instrumentalist and singer

The young vocalist Emily Masser is one of the most original and distinctive musicians to emerge on the current British scene, both as a scat singer and as an interpreter of lyrics. Her appearance on the newly released album, *Introducing Emily Masser*, with Clark Tracey's quintet, on which she sings alongside the brilliant saxophonist Alex Clarke, has been widely acclaimed, which is all the more remarkable given that she is still in her second year, studying saxophone and voice, at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

So I wondered what her route had been to get into music at this level. How did she get started?

My dad (Dean Masser) is a saxophone player, so I really wanted to learn the saxophone too, but he kept trying to put me off. I think he may even have been trying to encourage me to aim at a 'proper job', but eventually he gave in, when I was about eight years old, and gave me a saxophone mouthpiece. So I'd just toot along while he was practising. That did my mum's head in, so to stop the random tooting, she finally convinced my dad to let me play a real saxophone. Shortly after that I changed paths, thinking I wanted to be an opera

Making 'real world' connections

With appearances at Love Supreme and Jazz re:freshed this summer, twenty-something saxophonist **Maddy Coombs** is on the rise. **Eddie Myer** discovers her life offline among a diverse and inspirational peer community

Discerning aficionados of the UK scene will have noticed the arrival of a new name on the listings of the hipper venues and festival stages. Maddy Coombs is still in her early twenties, but has already appeared leading her own bands at We Out Here Festival, The Vortex, and a variety of similarly select London venues - proof that peers and tastemakers on the scene are taking notice.

However there's scant trace of the heavy socials presence that is expected from Gen Z artists – a deliberate policy on Maddy's part, as she tells me when we meet over the ubiquitous Zoom call from her South London digs. "I tried doing the Instagram thing for a bit but it wasn't very fulfilling, musically. For me jazz is a community music – that's when it's most fulfilling, playing with people that you really know from real life, not just through Instagram." Since she graduated last summer with a First from Guildhall's jazz programme, Maddy's been leading her own quartet, working with a close team of trusted peers – she names Sultan Stevenson, Finn Carter, Menelik Claffey, Harry Ling, Wilf Cameron-Marples, Jordan Hadfield, Ed Adonis, and Zoé Pascal as key collaborators. Working with this creative team, she's developing her own repertoire of original music that combines a contemporary London sensibility with a thorough grounding in the tradition.

How did the saxophone come into her life? "My family home was in Northampton. My dad's a big music fan and my mum plays piano, so there was always a lot of music around when I was growing up. My mum got me a clarinet one year for Christmas. Then my dad got himself a saxophone, and I would borrow it – he got annoyed because I could play it better than him, so he gave it to me. Since then he's been really supportive." Then what were the steps that led her from Northampton into the heart of the capital's thriving young jazz community? "When I was at school there were two teachers, Will Osborn and Jamie Glew, who worked for the local music trust, NMPAT. And they were such great teachers – they taught Tom and Joel Barford as well – and are so inspiring. They encouraged me to go to JRAM [the Junior Royal Academy jazz programme] and Tomorrow's Warriors. So I when I was at Sixth Form college I would commute to London every weekend – I didn't have much of a life in Northampton from that point, but I made so many new friends at Warriors." How did the two courses complement each other? "At JRAM I learnt a lot of essential theory – Gareth Lockrane was an incredible teacher! Gary Crosby and Binker Golding's classes at Warriors opened up a new world for me – I met so many of the people there that I'm still playing with now. Tomorrow's Warriors is like a family, so that even once you've left they help you get going in the real world, with gigs and career advice – their 'each one, teach one' ethos encourages you to come back and share what you've learnt. And having the opportunity to play every weekend was so important."

singer. My mum looked around to see where I could learn properly, so in the end I got a place at Chet's (Chetham's School of Music, in Manchester) to study classical saxophone and classical singing. So I was there for seven years, and when time came to go to college, I did all my auditions as a classical saxophone player. I ended up at Guildhall, and was happy doing classical music for about a term, until I thought, 'I'm bored of playing the same three saxophone concertos on repeat all the time', so I started to do a bit of jazz singing."

I wondered if one benefit of her classical voice studies had been to learn operatic techniques, that don't necessarily show up in jazz singing.

"Yes, I think so, and funnily enough, I'm currently working in the classical singing area for technique reasons. But actually at Chet's I mainly focused on learning loads of tunes, rather than technique itself, though I gather teenagers often don't know the right ways to sing. But even just learning so much repertoire gave me a much stronger basis for singing, although I reckon a lot of what I'm doing now as a jazz singer comes just as much from being a saxophone player. I grew up listening to my dad practicing, and listening to all kinds of players on CDs. Scat-wise, hearing all that saxophone music really paid off for me. I didn't ever really listen to Ella, or other singers at the time (although of course I do now), because I was listening to so much instrumental music."

I suspect that's one reason why, on the new album, she combines so effortlessly with Alex Clarke's horn, such as on Jimmy Deuchar's 'Suddenly Last Tuesday'. It's as if she is thinking instrumentally and Alex is thinking vocally.

"It's funny because I think that's how we hear each other. Sometimes she'll pull me up and say, 'You sang that word in a Northern accent, and in the next line you used a Southern one, but they're supposed to rhyme!' And I find myself saying, 'If you did that there, you'd be able to finish the phrase on this note...' So we really are talking about one another's specialisms."

Another aspect of the new record is that all the arrangements are by Emily, which in itself is quite an achievement, as some of them are far from simple.

"I didn't think I'd be any good at arranging. The first one I ever did was 'The Man I Love', which is on the album. I remember walking round the house singing lines while I was cooking or washing-up, and gradually they started coming together. One day I was humming something, which eventually became the intro section, because my dad said, 'Emily, that sounds rather good – write it down!' I said, 'I don't really know how!' So he started helping me, just before I started at Guildhall, and I really enjoyed the process, learning that less is more on the page, and how to make some sections of a piece really straightforward. When I got to college, I was having my first classical saxophone lesson and the teacher said, 'What d'you want to do?' and I said, 'Not this!' because I felt I was on the wrong course. I had talked to some of the jazz students on freshers' week and realised that sounded a whole lot more fun! Once I switched courses, the arranging thing started to come quite naturally."

Right now, Emily's balancing her studies with being out in the real world working with a range of experienced and professional players. So we ended our conversation by musing on what makes her ideal song. "For me, it has to be fun. Making things fun and accessible is my plan!"

Introducing Emily Masser **by the Clark Tracey Quintet is out now on Stray Horn Records**

How did the four-year course at Guildhall complement her development' "I feel that studying jazz at university level is kinda weird – it's a hard thing to teach in that classroom setting. People say that you have to learn, then unlearn again in order to play out in the world, and I think that's basically true. If you think about music too theoretically it formalises everything, and that's not what music's about for me. But it was great to get that depth of knowledge of harmonic theory, and the history of the music. It was a good experience." How does she approach music making now? "Sorry if this sounds a bit ethereal, but I just write music and play with people that I like playing with – try and explore and reach for something. I just enjoy playing!"

Her fellow musicians, many from the same core team that she met at Warriors, are an essential part of the creative process: "Playing with the same people for so long, I end up writing for them. I usually start writing on the piano, then bring in a lead sheet for the band, and from there it just kinda happens! Everyone knows what to play." She names her inspirations as Coltrane, Joe Henderson, Charlie Parker, Wayne Shorter and Art Blakey, "all the obvious ones!" but also namechecks some key contemporary inspirations "Shabaka, and all my teachers – Rachel Cohen in particular, and Jean Toussaint just drilled transcriptions into me, which is the best way of learning". What plans await? "I want to record soon. I've got enough songs for an album, and a place I want to record it – Dalston Lane Studios is a really beautiful space that my friend Angelo just opened. Once I figure out the funding – since leaving Guildhall I've been mostly working out how to survive in London! Fortunately I've found a place with cheap rent – Peckham! I'm also playing in some other bands, some very different contexts, with [trumpeter] Joseph Oti, with singer Nayana AB, and at the regular Slick N Bobbi dub reggae jam sessions at the Railway Tavern in Tulse Hill. I want to gig my music a bit more before recording it. I'm doing Jazz re:freshed and Watford Jazz and playing Love Supreme with Jazz In The Round. The music is evolving so quickly: I'm hearing trumpet and trombone on some songs, I love a fat horn section!"

Finally, how is it working as a young female musician on the UK jazz scene in 2024? "It can seem to be an advantage; people sometimes are looking for a female musician to book. But it's often not a deep engagement and can seem tokenistic. It would be nice to be able to hang with more women on the scene – it's often still such a male dominated space, but it's changing. I only really gig with people I feel safe with. But I think the London jazz scene is very healthy in that regard, I feel very supported within the community. The commercial music scene less so." And UK jazz in general? "I think it's expanded the genre so much - it's really special and very unique cos there's so many different cultures and communities coming together and making music – it's beautiful".

POTTER'S WHEEL SPINS FULL CIRCLE

Having explored synth-fuelled fusion with his Circuits trio, sax heavyweight Chris Potter now returns to his small group jazz roots with an all-star band for his latest album, *Eagle's Point*. Selwyn Harris spoke to the multi-reed maestro about how this all-acoustic revival not only kicks against today's dominance of digital, but also the fallibilities of AI

In 2019 he would tell *Jazzwise* he's been, "itching to get back to grooveland". Referring to his influential Underground band formed in the mid-noughties, Potter's updated version of 'grooveland' rocketed to a whole new level with the eponymous recording of his electric ensemble Circuits.

But now, five years on, the release of *Eagle's Point*, boasting a big-name quartet on UK's Edition label, signals another switch in direction in Potter's ever-evolving discography as he returns to his acoustic jazz roots. That's putting it far too neatly though. *Eagle's Point* is an album that more accurately reconciles his past with his present; perhaps better described as a modern-day renovation of the 'classic' acoustic jazz model. To some degree it's a reverse gear to when his career took off over three decades ago as an 18-year-old prodigy on the road with legendary ex-Charlie Parker sideman trumpeter Red Rodney, before going on to build an increasingly impressive discography as an ensemble leader through the 1990s.

But Potter has since then been discreetly absorbing influences from an ever-widening musical and extra-musical spectrum even when clinging to those familiar old-school jazz settings. On *Eagle's Point* the now 53-year-old saxophonist-composer is flanked by a like-minded bunch of similar-aged forward-thinkers who are a far too unassuming set of characters to be described as a supergroup – the singular pianist Brad Mehldau, and ex-Wayne Shorter Quartet rhythm section of Brian Blade and John Patitucci – even though that's exactly what they are.

"It's hard to say an exact reason for the change," he says on a Zoom video call from his New York home on a day off on a typically jam-packed touring schedule. "I've been thinking for years now how it would be nice to do something with Brad if he's interested in doing an all-star thing. Brad was one of the first people I met in New York. We were at the New School at the same time. After doing some records that, like you say, kind of had a different sonic palette, to go back to the classic thing with some of my favourite musicians on each instrument, it just felt like the time was right for something like that."

That being said, a strict chronology of historical album releases doesn't always give a full picture of how things actually pan out for a jazz musician in real time.

"To be honest I probably have now about three or four books of music with other kind of ensembles that are ready to go," he says. "There's lots of different music that I like and enjoy playing and exploring so I've always got a lot of ideas and not enough hours in the day or days in the year to get everything out at the same time. I always have a few different ideas on the stove if you want. We tried and almost got together to go into the studio a year before it actually happened in 2022. As you can imagine it's not that easy to get those three people in a room at the same time. Everyone did their best to make it happen but everyone's busy. This is not the fun part. Brian is based in Louisiana, Brad is spending most of his time in the Netherlands, me and John are the only ones in the New York area most of the time. So there's a lot of music written and conceived in the meantime, but I was extremely happy just to be able to get this document with those guys at this particular time. We're all roughly in the same age cohort and at similar stages in our careers. So we have a lot of the same reference points. There's a lot of shared perspective so there's not really a lot that needs to be said in the studio. It was just super-fun to do and it's a nice musical statement from everyone involved."

> ***"There's a lot of shared perspective so there's not really a lot that needs to be said in the studio"***

Chris Potter is widely considered today to be one of the most authentic inheritors of the intense, sinewy classic tenor horn soundworld that had passed from Coleman Hawkins down to Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane and Joe Henderson through to post-bop titans, among them Michael Brecker. Over the last three decades, he's been evolving his own unique sound while carefully nurturing the qualities that make jazz a high-art of ensemble communication and improvisation. His significant long-term apprenticeships with exceptional bands led by Dave Holland, Paul Motian, David Binney, Dave Douglas and as a key member of Pat Metheny's Unity Band, have shaped his own signature as leader, from the avant-funk electric grooves of the aforementioned Underground band formed in 2006 to his airily sophisticated ECM recordings released between 2013 and 2017.

At the same time he's been blowing up a storm with popular fusion bands from latter-day Steely Dan through to Snarky Puppy. At the start of this decade Potter would demonstrate he's still at the top of his game even in the midst of exploring uncharted territory: *There is a Tide*, a multi-tracked solo outing

All Photos: Dave Stapleton

"You really just have to spend hours and hours of working in a room, and hours and hours and hours playing with other people. Having that experience of working with other people in a real environment... that has nothing digital about it"

"I had a chance to play with Red Rodney, who played with Charlie Parker. I had a chance to play with Ray Brown, who played with Louis Armstrong"
– Chris Potter

created out of both artistic curiosity and sheer necessity during the Pandemic years was followed by his first post-quarantine release *Sunrise Reprise*, the second from his Circuits band featuring James Francies and Eric Harland, which saw the saxophonist-composer at his most grippingly intense and cathartic. As with these projects the new one also arrives with bags of fresh inspiration.

"There's so much music that I'm listening to and inspiring me that's not necessarily from the jazz realm," he says. "Definitely the history of classical music from Bach through to Ligeti, Stravinsky, Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms. This is a huge influence on a lot of us especially now. It's a big source both as a writer and improviser. Improvising is like spontaneous composition in a certain way so hearing how a piece of classical music starts with a certain kind of premise or theme and then works in a logical way. It goes here, returns, material is developed and then is used in a different way. This is the nuts and bolts of how to work with music and have notes tell the story. And also music from Africa and India. I've been very fortunate to work with Zakir Hussain for the past few years, which gives me a window into how that music is put together at an extremely high level and it gets into ways of organising the music that's a little bit different. Within the jazz idiom I think about the people I've grown up with, like Josh Redman and Mark Turner and Donny McCaslin. These are saxophone players who are about the same age as me who I've always respected and enjoyed bouncing ideas off.

"But I think a lot of us are still listening in the jazz world to these old recordings. I mean I'm still listening to Louis Armstrong and thinking about phrasing and seeing if I can find a way to bring that into a much more modern context. There's so much amazing music being made and it's almost like it's too much, available 24 hours a day, anything you want to hear. So every day you can be like, 'I haven't checked out the new Kendrick Lamar record, I wonder what that's like?'"

What's more ominous are recent digital advances, not just in mediation, but in the very act of musical creation using Artificial Intelligence (AI). Next to the arrival of AI, the kind of highly-evolved collective collaboration heard on the new recording seems to carry with it a special significance. It's a topic to which Potter has clearly given some thought.

"To a certain extent you start to feel that even putting a lot of time and energy into getting very good at an acoustic instrument feels like a bit of an anachronism in this day and age," he says. "The things that you have to do to get to that level goes against the main thrust of what's going on. You really just have to spend hours and hours and hours of working on it in a room and hours and hours and hours playing with other people. Having that experience of not just practising on your own but night after night working with other people in a real environment that has nothing digital about it. I would like to think that there's always going to be room for this kind of thing. I think people do appreciate being able to see and hear a performance that's really in that particular moment and nothing can be done later to alter it. It's the feeling of those people in a room. And of course that's

what makes the music special when I listen to it as well. I listen back to this album and so much of what I enjoy is hearing how Brian does something and how John responds and maybe affects how I play and Brad answers that.

"There's all of this communication going on at all times. That's what brings it to that higher level. Because everyone's so secure they're going 'let's just make the music work'. 'What can I do to add to this thing?' Things jump out, maybe the bass feels like it's at the forefront for a second. These are all the amazing moments that I've always loved when I'm listening to Miles Davis or John Coltrane records. So I think this is what makes it very, very special. There isn't any way at all we could have done this remotely. We just had to be there together. Hopefully that's what people will hear as the magic of the music. That's certainly how I feel about it. I don't think that's dead. That's something that AI will never be able to do. There's no way you could come close."

No more is it the case than in 'live' situations where jazz musicians can extend and further investigate the source material in dialogue right there in-the-moment. There are very few saxophonists on the planet who can fire up a concert stage the way Potter can and last year's release *Got the Keys to the Kingdom: Live at the Village Vanguard* is testament to that. As the quartet prepares to set out on tour, with drummer Jonathon Blake standing in for Brian Blade, Potter is also upbeat about reaching out to the youngest Gen Z demographic.

"I have definitely felt there is a lot of young folks coming out to gigs," he says. "I'm sure a fairly large percentage of them are studying to be musicians themselves so they're in the middle of it. But it's nice to see that there is definitely energy from young people about this. There are also lots of young people playing who are very, very advanced in how they're able to play. The kind of things that I don't necessarily hear with the youngest musicians are the things that come with the experience of working together with other people and learning from older musicians.

"I feel very fortunate that I arrived at a certain point when it was still a living thing. It still is a living thing but there were all these connections then. I had a chance to play with Red Rodney who played with Charlie Parker. I had a chance to play with Ray Brown who played with Louis Armstrong. These connections with the people that I had the chance to know at least a little bit and play with and hear how they talked about music and their experiences, that's definitely informed how I play every note. And it's the same for Brad and John and Brian. They've also had these experiences that have really enriched them as musicians. This is the kind of thing I hope we can somehow communicate through our music to a younger generation."

Another older tradition in danger of losing its prominent place in the cultural musical landscape is the 'album' recording format, due to the escalation of 'single-track' online streaming, and in spite of its recovery in the current vinyl renaissance. Potter explains how the 'album' concept has always been of huge importance to him as an artist as well as a listener.

Clockwise from top left: Brad Mehldau, John Patitucci, Chris Potter and Brian Blade in the studio

"I think for every album I make I kind of have an idea of the sound I want so the whole set of music will fit into that thing," he says. "Usually when I'm writing I'm thinking about a project and I'll write not just one tune but about nine or 10 tunes because I'm thinking of them like a set. I've always had that feeling that it's a way for me to get to my next level of musical development to have this idea of a set of music that's going to be an album that has a certain sound, a certain set of musicians. I document that and I can move onto the next thing. It's always felt like these are kind of milestones. I guess again it's a bit of an anachronism in this day and age when you can stream one tune at a time. But as a musician it's important to think in a longer time scale and not just one tune but a set of music. For the new album I definitely had an idea of the sound that I wanted to explore. It would be hard to put into words exactly what that sound is except it is even better than what was in my head. You always have an idea of it but when it comes into the real world and other people start interpreting it, of course, they have their way of doing it and you can either fight it and go 'no, I had this in mind' or 'oh wow, yeah that's an interesting idea'. Nine times out of 10 it's a wiser move to let people do what they do, especially if they're Brad Mehldau, John Patitucci and Brian Blade!"

Chris Potter's *Eagle's Point* is out now on Edition Records and Potter, Mehldau, Patitucci and Jonathan Blake play at North Sea Jazz Festival on Friday 12 July

Voyaging into the unknown

Saxophonist Tim Garland and his top-flight Lighthouse Trio, with Gwilym Simcock and Asaf Sirkis, celebrate 20 years together with an ambitious double album including the Britten Sinfonia and violin star Thomas Gould. The multi-reedist tells Stuart Nicholson that its title, *Moment of Departure*, simultaneously nods to its improvisation-spiked compositions as well as the hopes and fears of migration

The popular saying, "you can't go home again" was also the title of a 1940 Thomas Wolfe novel, and today it's taken to mean you can never go back to how things used to be. Things change, times change. Nostalgia is not what it used to be. Which is all very well, but in jazz we seem to have reached a point in history where anniversaries – the 25th, the 50th anniversary of this, or the 75th anniversary of that – arrive thick and fast. They remind us that the sunken treasures of jazz's past exist, and even if you can't go home again, they yield their own rewards.

But with the 20th anniversary of Tim Garland's Lighthouse Trio – a band that once seemed on the verge of becoming one of the most celebrated jazz ensembles in Europe before the project went on hold – about to be clocked up, there is definitely no chance of going back to how things once were. Recreating past glories is not on the agenda. Garland and company are more intent on picking up from when they left off and rediscovering themselves anew, while making up for lost ground in the process.

"I always really loved the trio," reflects Garland. "It just felt like a magic triangle. I suppose it's through the number of man hours we spent rehearsing and gigging together over those years... I mean it took about five minutes during the rehearsals – ten months ago – and it was just like picking up as if we had come off tour yesterday and I thought, 'Yes!'

"I like the idea of having a deep rapport with the musicians around me, since there is no question about the sense of faith you have in them. The trio has become an orchestra unto itself, to hear how we have developed since we last played is absolutely priceless, really."

Master drummer and percussionist Asaf Sirkis agrees, excited and inspired by the promise of things yet to come: "It was great to get together again and one can't ignore the urge to compare between how it felt to play then and now. As Tim said, we all went through our own journeys as musicians and I'm looking forward to touring again and exploring new territories and sounds, not merely a 'closing of a circle' but opening a new one as a representation of who we are now."

For pianist Gwilym Simcock, recently touring the world as a member of Pat Metheny's band, a return to the Lighthouse Trio involves a fresh musical challenge he relishes: "It was certainly fantastic to play again, and I guess – out of the three of us – my role differs more from my pianistic role in other bands, so it's great to rediscover the unique creative opportunities that this band offers. Tim is always an incredible inspiration on the compositional front, so it's a massive pleasure to be re-immersed in his world again!"

Lighthouse originally evolved as a group project during the making of Garland's 2005 album, *If The Sea Replied*.

"That first Lighthouse album very much featured a string orchestra – in fact, that whole idea started because I wanted freedom within that string orchestra context featuring some improvisors," Garland reflects. "I thought Asaf, and Gwil and I would be the ones to do it. So the very formation of that band came from a very compositional standpoint. Obviously it wasn't long after that we realised that it is was enormous fun and really creative to just go out and gig as a trio, but I was wearing my composer's hat at the beginning."

For their reunion, Garland composed a major new work and this month will see release of the two-CD set *Moment of Departure* (Ubuntu), with the Britten Sinfonia. It is the fourth album featuring the Lighthouse Trio, and is perhaps best viewed as part of a continuum that includes *If the Sea Replied* (2005) and *Libra* (2009), both of which incorporated long- form classical compositions for strings (the album *Lighthouse* from 2012 did not include any orchestral content).

In fact, Garland had already forged a strong working relationship with Simcock when they were both members of bassist Malcolm Creese's Acoustic Triangle, while the prodigiously talented Asaf Sirkis' reputation preceded him,

Photo: Stefan Booth

"It was just like picking up as if we had come off tour yesterday... and I thought, 'Yes!'" – *Tim Garland on playing with Lighthouse Trio again*

and was perfectly suited to the demanding role in a trio *sans* double bass.

"*Moment of Departure* is my seventh album where I have used a larger orchestral ensemble of some kind," continues Garland. "So it is very much a continuation of a long held fascination – *Libra* was a good halfway point, another double album. Then there was *Songs for the North Sky*, which wasn't a Lighthouse album, but where I had a series of pieces where I asked John Patitucci to do some improvised interludes linking song with song. That is so much like the violin concerto that forms part of *Moment of Departure* called 'The Forever Seed' – indeed, it is the same thing happening where you have these largely notated things and then linking sections that allow the musicians to improvise."

The relationship between the written and improvised demands the soloist fully understand the material at hand in order to construct a solo around the needs of the composition, rather than a solo that may, or may not relate to the thematic material at hand. It makes for a fascinating subtext to *Moment of Departure*: "Throughout the double album, you've got different ways of departing from composition, basically jumping-off points of different types for improvisation, which then links-up with the written. Sometimes, you write some textural things for strings and you think, 'It will be amazing to hear Gwilym play over this,' or 'perhaps I'll do a bit of bass clarinet over this' – you have to start from one side, I suppose, and the other eagerly presents itself as

Lighthouse Trio:
Simcock, Sirkis and Garland

Thomas Gould

> ***"The trio has become an orchestra unto itself, to hear how we have developed since we last played is absolutely priceless, really"***

a balance. The overarching concept of *Moment of Departure*, the one thing in common that all this music has, is its relationship with improvisation.

"So you have got on the first disc quite obviously made up of the trio plus the Britten Sinfonia in two of the pieces – it also has Yazz Ahmed guesting – and I wouldn't say it is conventional, but this is the sort of music we are going to be playing live. With the second disc, the interest then was preserving the idea of the fun and excitement of joining improvisation and the written in different ways, so the 'Approaching Winter,' which is based on Vivaldi's *Winter*, I have approached in a way which we can do live as well, with Tom Gould's solos and Lighthouse, so basically something where the themes are stated and we're immediately off improvising.

"The big, through-composed work, 'The Forever Seed,' was written first as a kind of lockdown thing, a concerto for Tom Gould, who is a great violin soloist in the classical sense, but he is also someone who is willing to dive into improvisation – again, it's that moment of departing from the notated and diving into what is going on right now! The main movements will be almost one hundred per cent notated and then flip into this twilight land of semi-improvisation, to link all the pieces together. Sometimes it is not necessary for the audience to know when it's written and when it's not. I love that, with the title including 'departure' the whole thing is designed so that you never really know what was written down and what was improvised!"

The essence of music has always been realised in live performance, and three dates with the Britten Sinfonia performing *Moment of Departure* live, and 12 dates with The Lighthouse Trio later in the year are now filling Garland's viewfinder.

"Well that's the vibe as well, isn't it? When they have learned something and it is all played rather perfectly, that's of course amazing and very, very valid, but there is something of an eternal kind of nowness when you capture people when they are really on the edge in live performance, in a concentrated state of 'no thought,' and when you catch people who are skilled improvisors like that, I don't think it ever dates. So with the trio we have got two or three numbers from previous albums, while the first disc of *Moment of Departure* contains four or five pieces which are just the trio, we're just doing versions of those, and hopefully we reach a lovely climax for the London Jazz Festival later in the year.

"The one other thing which is interesting about this tour is that we will have a big digital screen behind us, since some of my music has been influenced by Esra Kizir Gokcen's art – 'Wouldn't that be great to have the art displayed in the background as we're playing' – and there is one piece we're doing that is synched up, so the art is designed to change dramatically in time to the music, so that's a new thing for me. The first half of the album there is a series of paintings that Esra – who is also my partner, by the way – did called 'Sail to Hope' which was very much reflecting on her migrant experience, and I found those paintings really inspiring, particularly the way some of her techniques of creating involved improvisation and spontaneity." Those pieces are reflected on disc one include titles such as 'Winds of Hope', 'Trails', 'No Horizon', 'Moment of Departure' and 'Moment of Arrival'.

"Esra was doing a series of workshops where she started to ask people what hope was for them, because their workshops were largely made up by migrant communities – schools or education centres – and I started to get involved, because some of the artwork they were producing was so stunning, and I thought it would be really great to get a website where we were able to put some of their work up, and also film them and ask them if they minded being filmed for a minute or two, and we have interviewed about 60 people now, people literally from all around the world, talking briefly about what hope meant for them, and it's just really moving and fills you with compassion and is a beautiful thing to do.

"It is a different section of the community that I probably wouldn't have encountered, you get such amazing stories and I think they get a lot out of being taken seriously. We're including some of the Lighthouse gigs in the footage of what the interviewees have said – everyone's story is important – and so I have Esra to thank for broadening my outlook in that way, because she was the one who was doing all these workshops, I just sort of joined in! When you look at the general standard [of jazz] today, it's so high, that's all great, there is no downside to that, but people do ask where's the point of contact with my heart? There are so many virtuosic, clever jazz musicians out there and my response to that as an artist is that my heart and my soul is dying for true nutrition, and I am not saying I offer it all the time, but that is my aspiration."

***Moment of Departure* is out now on Ubuntu Music and Lighthouse Trio play a series of live dates across the year, including Milton Court with Britten Sinfonia and Yazz Ahmed on 19 November as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival**

Photos: Stefan Booth

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Still Waters Run Deep

Saxophonist **Jasmine Myra** is back with an expansive second album, *Rising*, ushering in a new creative phase which sees her building in confidence as a bandleader and composer. **Nick Hasted** spoke to the altoist about her highly personal take on 21st Century spiritual jazz

"I love how playing the sax feels almost like singing"

Jasmine Myra is forging her own form of spiritual jazz, superficially serene, yet surging purposefully forward, like a calm river's natural flow. The Leeds-born saxophonist's two albums to date for Matthew Halsall's Gondwana Records track her personal evolution. *Horizons* (2022) was a 'healing album', tending pandemic wounds of isolation, unemployment and anxiety, till its closing track, 'New Beginnings', soared free of such cares and into the future. Her new recording *Rising* seems to resume a moment later, in a more expansive place. Carmel Smickersgill's string trio arrangements, Myra's alto sax and flute, the harp and percussion, all present on *Horizons*, now sometimes sound symphonic, daring to be majestic while maintaining the grooves Myra also majors in. This balancing of placid mood and movement, modesty and ambition mirrors Myra's emotional and soulful progress.

"It feels like a continuation," she agrees. "*Rising*'s title isn't about just carrying on from *Horizons*' healing, but growing, and finding confidence."

'Still Waters' begins with Myra's flute, balmy and slow, till the band falls in just behind her pied piper lead, now on sax, and strings add lustre: "It starts very calm and controlled and builds into this much deeper, more emotional thing," she considers. "And I think a lot about the phrase, 'still waters run deep'. Quiet people who are seemingly shy still have emotional depth, and I like the idea that you don't have to change yourself in order to fit into a box. I'm naturally introverted, I can talk and chat, but I want to shy away, and do my own thing. And for years I've felt like in order to be confident, I would have to change that aspect of my personality and be louder. But actually, people are complicated. You can be quiet *and* confident."

> **"People are complicated. You can be quiet and confident"**

As a bandleader, too, Myra is very different to imperious predecessors such as Miles or Mingus: "I have confidence in me to lead people. I just don't have to be assertive, or have that confidence, all the time. And releasing music as an artist, I can definitely switch into 'Jasmine Myra', instead of [her given name] Jasmine Whalley," she laughs. "But it's funny going back to the hotel room after a gig and just finally going, 'Okay, actually, that did require a lot of energy.' And this again is what *Rising* is all about. It's accepting that you can do whatever, but do it authentically. Don't fit into the mould that you think is correct."

'Knowingness' is another album highlight. Eastern beginnings morph into mighty soul-jazz, while maintaining a clear thread of spiritual intent.

"The title is kind of spiritual," Myra says. "It's knowing that the things you want in life will come to fruition if you just keep working towards them, and letting go of anxiety. And if you can apply that thinking to life in general you are going to enjoy the journey instead of worrying about it not working out. I have gained confidence with working on this band for the last couple of years. It's helped me, since overcoming the mental health issues that I had in lockdown. Some people don't have to think too much about maintaining their mental health, but I used to be anxious literally 24/7, and I have to put the work in, with mindfulness and positive thinking and understanding the psychology behind why we feel certain ways. I'm now trying to just trust that I'll be happy. It ties into my music as well. It's made me excited to see where I can take this, because I've already surprised myself a little bit."

Raised in Horsforth, Leeds, Myra took time to get under jazz's skin as a teenage listener, initially put off by Charlie Parker's bop thickets. At Leeds College of Music, Cannonball Adderley's soulful, emotional directness plotted her playing path. Kenny Wheeler's big band compositions on the likes of *Music for Large & Small Ensembles* (1990) meanwhile inspired her. Like both Wheeler and her label boss Matthew Halsall, Myra's beautiful playing now seems secondary to her own composing's growing reach.

"I love how playing the sax feels almost like singing," she says. "But it's always the area where I think, I need to work on this. I know who I am more with writing, I've developed a sound. Most of the emotion comes out there as well. Imposter syndrome also kicks in when I'm sat writing, because that's where the creativity is and it's all very vulnerable. But it's mostly this lovely, calm space where I can escape to."

Myra's college big band experience, and Wheeler's example, come through on *Rising*'s rich arrangements. "Yeah, it started with *Horizons*, where the band was getting bigger and bigger," she says. "On *Rising* it's eight people, with strings and percussion on top, and writing it, I kept thinking, 'Could I add one more?' I'm really proud of the grandeur of a track like 'From Embers'. I enjoyed those big, lush layers, and the next one might be even bigger."

Myra's love of more electronic outfits such as Bonobo and Soweto Kinch's jazz/hip-hop nexus can perhaps be heard on the simmering rhythm epic 'Glimmers'. Elsewhere, there are Afro-Cuban beats.

"My drummer George Hall took the reins with the grooves," she says. "He's really into hip-hop, and a lot of African music. I would send him my compositions' demos without any drums on, and he would open them up. On [closing track] 'How Tall the Mountains', I love how that sounds just like a big party at the end, free and fun."

When Myra last spoke to *Jazzwise*, she extolled being a young musician in Leeds' mutually supportive, village-like community. She now notes the Jazz North Introduces initiative as crucial to keeping her college band together as a going concern: "They helped me get outside of Leeds to jazz festivals, gave me mentoring and really helped get it to the next level. Without that opportunity, I don't know what would've happened."

Firmly established at thriving, Manchester-based label Gondwana, Myra maintains that London's siren lure is no longer a necessity for ambitious Northern musicians. She anyway moved to the Smoke last year, following a still tight, Leeds-by-Thames community of old friends.

"Everyone came down for different reasons," she says. "It's quite funny. Whenever we go to someone we know's gig, it's 'Leeds assemble!' and 30 of us turn up..."

The capital's unfamiliar vastness is, meanwhile, one more phase in Myra's ongoing growth: "Whenever you're explaining yourself to new people, you get a clearer vision in your mind of who you are. Life in London is harder than Leeds, it costs a lot more to exist so I'm having to graft more, but that is challenging me to grow and mature as well. Inspiration doesn't just come from music. You can get inspired by art or your environment, the people that you're surrounded by. There is a buzz for me in London, because I'm going to new places and seeing new jams, and it's really giving me energy and motivation."

The music Myra makes next will surely reflect her multiple leaps in mature ambition, even as she stays modest at heart.

"It's excitement for the journey that you're on, but being grateful for where you're at," she says. "I'm trying to balance being happy – but wanting more."

Rising is out now on Gondwana Records

Photo: Sophie Jouvenaar

FREEDOM AMONG THE STARS

A century ago an extraordinary singular human by the name of Marshall Allen was beamed to this planet. He was to go on to become a member of iconic Afro-futurist jazz pioneer Sun Ra's Arkestra and remains a central figure of the band to this day. Daniel Spicer called him up to discover the secrets of his otherworldly musical life force

Speaking to Marshall Allen on the phone from his home in Philadelphia, I make the observation that it's been a long time since he first started playing the music of Sun Ra. "Yeah man!" he laughs with a throaty rumble. "1958, and still at it! I ain't going nowhere!"

This seems to be the incontrovertible truth. On 25 May, Allen celebrates 100 years of living on Planet Earth. It's an astonishing achievement, for sure, but what's perhaps even more amazing is that he has spent nearly 70 of those years as a member – and, more recently, leader – of the Sun Ra Arkestra. During that time, he's been a loyal trooper under Ra's cosmic guidance. He's been a vital, if under-sung, stylist on alto saxophone and a growing arsenal of instruments. And he's been the indefatigable figurehead of the Arkestra's reinvigorated 21st century incarnation. If he's not going anywhere, it also seems like he's always been here.

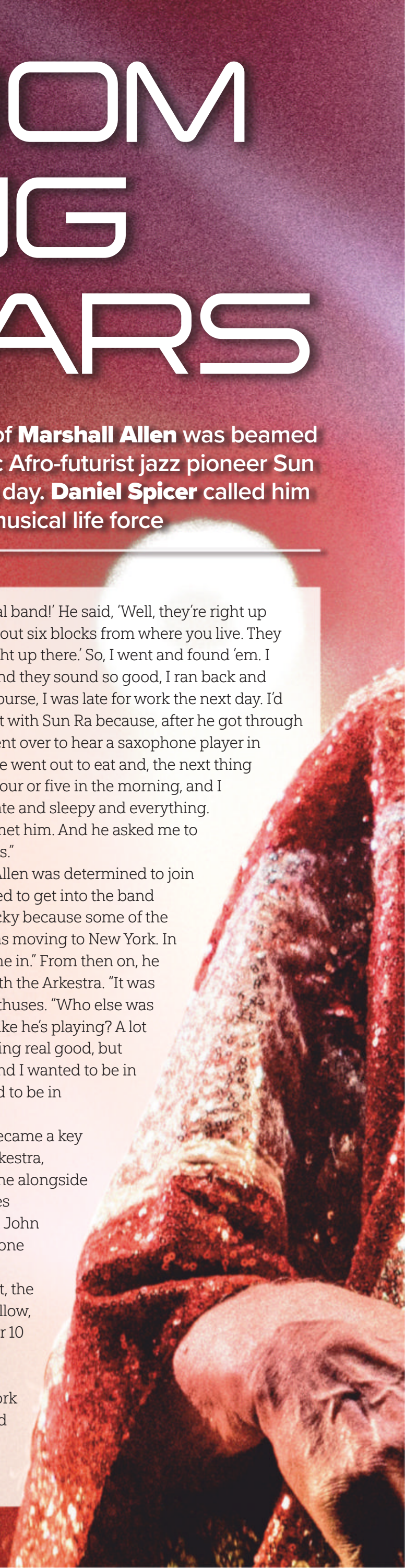
But there was a beginning to his journey into the music, starting way back in the 1940s. During World War II, he was stationed in Paris with the 92nd Infantry – one of the so-called 'Buffalo Soldier' regiments of primarily African-Americans – and played clarinet and alto sax in the 17th Division Army band. Come peacetime, he remained in Paris, studying clarinet at the Paris Conservatory of Music on the GI Bill, and touring with expatriate saxophonist, James Moody. In 1951, he returned to the States and spent a few years "jamming around Chicago," he says. "I was just going to jam sessions and stuff like that. Until I heard Sun Ra's music."

This was in 1957, by which time Sun Ra had been leading the Arkestra for a couple of years, earning a reputation as a galvanising (if somewhat outlandish) figure on the local scene with his band of musicians clad in Egyptian and space-aged costumes. Ra had also already recorded two albums, *Jazz by Sun Ra* and *Super-Sonic Jazz*, both released that year. Allen still vividly recalls the jolt he experienced on first hearing the latter.

"I had a job at a camera company, polishing lenses. One day, I got off work and bought that album. I took it home and listened to it and I was like 'Boy, what's that band?' The stuff they were doing, I'd never heard that before. It was far out and [had] different kinds of melodies. So, I went back and asked the guy I bought the record off, 'Where's this band? This is a real band!' He said, 'Well, they're right up there near you, about six blocks from where you live. They practise every night up there.' So, I went and found 'em. I heard the band, and they sound so good, I ran back and bring my horn! 'Course, I was late for work the next day. I'd stayed up all night with Sun Ra because, after he got through rehearsing, we went over to hear a saxophone player in a club and then we went out to eat and, the next thing you know, it was four or five in the morning, and I went to work all late and sleepy and everything. That was when I met him. And he asked me to come to rehearsals."

Straight away, Allen was determined to join the Arkestra: "I tried to get into the band and then I was lucky because some of the mainstay guys was moving to New York. In '58, he finally let me in." From then on, he threw in his lot with the Arkestra. "It was the sound!" he enthuses. "Who else was playing the stuff like he's playing? A lot of guys were playing real good, but that was a *band* and I wanted to be in the band. I wanted to be in *that* band!"

Allen quickly became a key member of the Arkestra, joining the frontline alongside other loyal acolytes including tenorist John Gilmore and baritone player Pat Patrick. Wherever Ra went, the Arkestra would follow, which is how, after 10 years in Chicago, Allen ended up moving to New York in 1961. "We played a gig in Montreal," he recalls. "On the way back,



Photos: Gonzales Photo

> ***"The space age is here to stay, there's no place you can run away"***

we said we're going to stop in New York and see some of the fellas who was in the band who had moved to New York. When we got there, a taxi cab hit our car, so we were stuck there until they paid for the car. We had to find a place to stay, and we ended up just staying there, we got an apartment, we had a gig or two. And we never did get back to Chicago!"

Plunged into the crucible of New York's nascent free-jazz scene, the Arkestra embraced a more abstract experimentalism, becoming essential architects of the New Thing. Allen met these new challenges with vigour, developing an urgent alto style full of abrasive honks and raw cries that put him on the cutting edge of the new avant-garde. Yet, like so many of Ra's men, he largely resisted playing with other musicians, devoting almost all of his energies to Ra's cosmic mission. In 1968, the Arkestra relocated e*n masse* to Philadelphia, living communally in a house in Germantown, which was to remain Ra's base until he left the planet in 1993. After Ra's departure, John Gilmore led the Arkestra until his own death in 1995. Then, with the Arkestral spacecraft in need of another steady hand at the controls, the job naturally fell to Allen.

In the three decades since Allen took the helm, he's been the driving force in

consolidating the Arkestra's reputation as a formidable and much-loved live act, touring tirelessly and widely. The group has welcomed a stable of younger players while also calling on the connection to the source provided by a couple of elders. Baritone saxophonist and flautist, Danny Ray Thompson – who first joined the Arkestra in 1967 – was a jovial presence until his death in 2020. Today, saxophonist, flautist and vocalist, Knoel Scott – on board since 1979 – functions as Allen's unofficial deputy. Still sporting the sequinned capes and Pharaonic headgear that have been the Arkestra's identity since the beginning, the current configuration puts on a heck of a show, faithfully keeping Ra's repertoire alive and introducing new audiences to the full range of Arkestral moods – from jaunty swing tunes to deep modal vamps, wafting space ballads to furious free-jazz firestorms, and always peppered with snatches of Ra's liberating Afro-Futurist mythology of freedom among the stars.

In 2020, the Arkestra released *Swirling* – their first studio album in over 20 years – presenting new recordings of a selection of Ra classics and fully establishing the current line-up as a vital working band under Allen's directorship. The album was enormously well-received and was even nominated for a Grammy Award.

This was followed up by 2022's *Living Sky*, which mixed some older material with brand new instrumental compositions by Allen: 'Firefly' is a tender ballad on which he pushes the alto into ecstatic fervour; 'Marshall's Groove' is a crawling blues; on 'Day Of The Living Sky' he switches to West African kora, adding delicate plucks and strums over clopping hand percussion and lilting flutes.

Marshall's alto technique has, inevitably, changed and evolved as he's got older, moving towards shorter, punchier phrases that serve as punctuation, often signposting a switch in energies. In live performance, it's usually Allen's terse and

"The stuff they were doing, I'd never heard that before. It was far out and [had] different kinds of melodies."
– Marshall Allen on first hearing Sun Ra's music in 1957

Photo: Tim Dickeson

> **[The Arkestra] was a *band* and I wanted to be in *that* band!**

peremptory pronunciations that act as the Arkestra's cue to push the music even further out. These days, he's also just as likely to play the Electronic Valve Instrument – or EVI – a kind of breath-controlled synthesizer, which can be played like a sax, but which offers a boundless palette of electronic sound. In Allen's hands, it's the key to unlocking a whole galaxy of sci-fi whooshes and cosmic sparkles. It also takes considerably less puff to play than the sax. "I had to get something because the saxophone was wearing me down," Allen laughs, "I been playing it so long!"

After a staggering seven decades on the road, Allen has recently had to step away from international touring, on doctors' orders. "They suggested that I don't travel on planes on account I had a couple of problems. That's why you haven't seen me in Europe lately. But I still play and all that. I make it to New York or Washington or close by." Today, Allen still lives in the Philadelphia house that has been Arkestra HQ ever since 1968. Though no longer the bustling commune and rehearsal space it once was (currently just four members of the Arkestra, including Allen, live there), it serves as a kind of living shrine to the Living Myth himself, Allen's erstwhile employer and eternal inspiration, Sun Ra. There's a very real sense that Allen represents the last link to Ra's endlessly fascinating art and cosmology.

To wrap up our conversation, I ask him what he thinks is the most important message we can take from Sun Ra's philosophy. "Well," he says, preparing to recite some of Ra's homespun cosmo-wisdom, "the space age is here to stay, there's no place you can run away. Run to the rock to hide your face, rock cried out 'no hiding place.' So, wake your people up to the space age and now they know. They're going from planet to planet, until they can find some place they can land and check it out. Space is here to stay."

FIVE ENLIGHTENING ALBUMS FEATURING MARSHALL ALLEN...

Sun Ra & His Arkestra – *Jazz In Silhouette* (El Saturn/Evidence 1959)

Ra's third album was the first to feature Allen, playing alto sax and flute, and it beautifully captures the Arkestra's 1950s Chicago sound that first entranced the young Allen. Ra's lush arrangements for the 10-piece ensemble owe much to his love of Fletcher Henderson – but his charts are deceptively thorny. While firmly rooted in tradition it's already starting to look ahead to strange new vistas.

Sun Ra and his Myth Science Arkestra – *Angels and Demons at Play* (El Saturn/Evidence 1965)

Side A of this studio date was recorded just a year later, in 1960, and shows how far, and how rapidly, the Arkestra were stretching out, with Allen's help. Here, he plays flute only, bringing a hazy lilt to some of Ra's most transporting tunes. The title track – written by Allen and bassist Ronnie Boykins – is an all-time classic with Allen's flute floating gracefully over a driving bass riff for the ages.

Paul Bley Quintet – *Barrage* (ESP-Disk 1965)

Cut a few years after the Arkestra relocated to New York, *Barrage* is one of Allen's very few appearances as a sideman outside of the Arkestra – and captures him right at the forefront of the 1960s New Thing. Pianist Bley's hard-hitting quintet, also featuring drummer Milford Graves, bassist Eddie Gómez and trumpeter Dewey Johnson, tackles six Carla Bley compositions, with Allen's snarling and barking alto cutting through the dense free-jazz melee like a hot knife through butter.

Marshall Allen/Matthew Shipp/Joe Morris – *Night Logic* (Rogue Art 2010)

For those in the know, Allen has remained an avant-garde hero, as evidenced on this rich collaboration with two younger practitioners from the left-field, pianist Matthew Shipp and bassist Joe Morris. Across a 70-minute live set, Allen – every bit the elder statesman – conjures a variety of moods, digging deep into stringent alto sax, bubbling up cosmic EVI wobbles and unfurling diaphanous flute.

Knoel Scott ft Marshall Allen – *Celestial* (Night Dreamer 2023)

After nearly 40 years as a member of the Arkestra, saxophonist/flautist/vocalist Knoel Scott released his debut as a leader and called upon the eternal talents of Allen to lift it into stellar realms. Allen's impenetrably concise alto phrases provide a tough foil for Scott's smoother blowing and, on a couple of turbulent free-form improvisations, he shows that he's still at home in fiery territory, while his astral EVI textures prove that space is still the place.

“There are very few people who bring out something that’s so different from what they’ve done before. He’s so free!”

The great British tenor saxophonist **Mark Lockheart**, famed for his work with Loose Tubes and Polar Bear, tells **Brian Glasser** about how a 1980s album by his hero Wayne Shorter changed his musical life...

“There was a clear winner in the end for this: I thought, ‘What’s a record that’s influenced my writing and my playing in equal measure?’. The answer was *Atlantis*.

When I was young, I was really into Paul Desmond and Getz, which was because of my dad’s record collection. He loved jazz, so I’d wake up on a Sunday morning to Oscar Peterson and Ella. We’d order records together from Mole Jazz, because in Portsmouth there were not many record shops. The night before a record was due, I could hardly sleep, I was so excited! When it came, I’d lie on the floor and study every detail of the cover. But my dad didn’t have much Wayne; so I’m pretty sure that the first time I heard him was on ‘Time Of The Barracudas’, a track on *The Individualism Of Gil Evans*. Wayne plays an incredible solo and it’s such a big statement when he enters.

I clearly remember when *Atlantis* came out in 1985. By then, I’d heard all the Miles and Blue Note things of course, and *Native Dancer*. He can burn on *ESP*; whereas the Joni Mitchell stuff – the conceptual, minimal nature of what he does – was a big inspiration. The way he plays behind singers is fantastic. Then, the music on *Atlantis* is quite busy, and sometimes quite dense. There’s very few people who bring out something that’s so different from what they’ve done before. He’s so free!

When I got it, I was getting into writing seriously - I’d been playing in Loose Tubes but hadn’t written much of my own stuff. I was obsessed with this record, and played it over and over again. I haven’t heard it that much in the years since; but I’ve been listening to it again in preparation for this [interview], and it’s an incredible album, sonically – especially the overdubbing of the saxophones, it’s like a sax section and sounds from another world. I’m not sure I realised that when I first heard it; but I think maybe sub-consciously that’s what drew me to it - the incredible sound world of it. Then, the writing, the storytelling, is extraordinary – it’s kind of brash, in your face. The melody writing and the counter-melody, the contrapuntal things, there are even some poppy bits, it’s all wonderful.

I actually think it sounds better now - more unique than I knew it was at the time. It’s masterful, and I love everything about it. I think a lot of people were put off because the first track’s quite electronic and programmed, and that’s probably my least favourite track. But the rest of it is pretty much acoustic. I listen to it now and there’s some incredible soprano and tenor playing. There’s not much improvising; but the improvising that he does do, which is mostly on soprano, is amazing. As a player, he’s been the Number One for me. There’s no one like him; and no one can touch him for expression and variety. Although he didn’t do all that much on the later Weather Report records, I still liked the sound of his sax – for instance, on *Domino Theory*, it’s like a chorus effect. I went out and bought a digital delay on the strength of it! I’m not sure how I sounded - I guess it was very much of its time!

It’s funny, but I never really wanted to meet him. I had an opportunity to do so once. I’m slightly ashamed that I didn’t, but I didn’t want to spoil the mystique. It was at the Barbican, and we went backstage – there was a big queue of people, and I started to wait; and my wife was keen for me to meet him, because she knew how much he meant to me. But then suddenly I realised that I sort of didn’t want to - he’s here [in the world] in a way that is enough for me. I’d had this mysterious relationship with him through listening to his music for so many years, and I didn’t really want that to change. He’s the only person that I think that about. He’s too huge for me, both as a player and composer. He’s the way I always wanted to play the saxophone.”

Mark Lockheart’s new album *Smiling* is out now

Wayne Shorter
Atlantis
Columbia (1985)
PERSONNEL: Wayne Shorter (ss, ts); Joseph Vitarelli (ky); Yaron Gershovsky, Michiko Hill (p); Jim Walker (f); Larry Klein (b); Alex Acuna (d, perc) and other musicians.
TRACKS: ‘Endangered Species’, ‘The Three Marias’, ‘The Last Silk Hat’, ‘When You Dream’, ‘Who Goes There!’, ‘Atlantis’, ‘Shere Khan, The Tiger’, ‘Crianças’ and ‘On The Eve Of Departure’.

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Albums: New Releases

The UK's most comprehensive review section: Jazz and beyond

★★★★★ Landmark Recording ★★★★ Excellent ★★★ Good ★★ Average ★ Disappointing

(ahmed)
Giant Beauty

Fonstret 9-13 (5CD) ★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Pat Thomas (p), Seymour Wright (as), Joel Grip (b) and Antonin Gerbal (d). Rec. 2022

Last month (ahmed) played a four-day residency at Cafe OTO in London that had a truly rapturous finale, and for those who missed it this 5-CD box set of a residency at the Festival For Other Music in Stockholm two years ago offers adequate compensation. Named after the Sudanese-American bassist-oudist-composer Ahmed Abdul-Malik, the quartet has achieved the enviable feat of growing from inside the music of its subject, absorbing its character and synergizing with the strong personalities of the bandmembers, so that pianist Pat Thomas, bassist Joel Grip, drummer Antonin Gerbal and alto saxophonist Seymour Wright push the source material to new musical planes that are nonetheless framed by a limitlessly wide history of black music.

In the epic 45 minute re-imaginings of songs such as 'African Bossa Nova' and 'rooh (the soul)' there is a subversion of form that makes the original material a rich acorn from which springs the giant beauty of the title, to be possibly interpreted not so much as a towering height that induces an exciting vertigo as a breadth of structural variety that makes the music a thrilling ride. 'el haris (anxious)' is arguably a highlight insofar as its evolutionary journey is so fiery. The original crepuscular Arabic motifs morph seamlessly into a range of rhythms that twist through traditions of folk and art music in the 20th century, offsetting the hard edge of the avant-garde with subtleties that are Caribbean as well as African-American.

Most audaciously, there are the strangest collisions of static ragtime and elastic rocksteady that say much of the ability of Wright and Thomas to make a two-beat phrase sing more than one would expect from such a minimal harmonic base. But the whole point, and this really came across at the OTO gigs, is that when the quartet builds up a head of steam, it keeps blowing rather than dropping energy during several changes of pathway, so that the result is tension and increase rather than tension and release.

The trick is to make the next level more daring than the last, and that can involve the further reduction of harmony to one clenched chord that has all the raw, rough, rugged excitation of early blues that is yet to settle into recognised templates, or explosive, hyperactive swing, or, as befits the band's aesthetic, a crash and mash of the two. Thomas' hammer of a left hand supersizes the low register to often make the music imperiously bass heavy and enhance the sense of physicality that is upheld by the toughness of the timbres heard elsewhere.

The raucous post-war R&B resonance of the horn, the funky patter of the drums and iron thrust of the double bass combine in a wall of sound that finally tumbles down after a barrage of multi-directional ideas as well as challenges to our perception, or rather assumptions of separateness of different periods of musical history. A single song thus becomes a series of related, unbroken time-stretching events or episodes that reflect a joyously uncompromising ideal in creative music: let a composition undergo transformation by way of the do and dare of improvisation.

Kevin Le Gendre

Arild Andersen/ Daniel Sommer/ Rob Luft
As Time Passes

April Records APR127 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★

Arild Andersen (b), Rob Luft (g) and Daniel Sommer (d). Rec. 9-19 March 2023

Arild Andersen has long worn the mantle 'Bass Legend' with distinction, his playing here as effortless as it is faultless. He has also long been an enthusiastic supporter of emerging young talent, selflessly mentoring a long list of musicians over the years who have listened and learned at the hands of a master. Although this trio is nominally led by drummer Daniel Sommer, Andersen's hand is also on the tiller because in early 2023, Sommer was participating in the Advanced Postgraduate Diploma Programme at the Danish National Academy of Music, which allowed him to select a mentor to work with to advance his studies. Sommer was then studying with Andersen, who in turn invited Rob Luft to join them to complete the trio for a series of concerts, culminating in this recording for April Records.

They set their stall out with recordings of exceptional sound quality and this CD is a little gem of group cohesion, interplay and well conceived solos – especially from Rob Luft, who holds this ensemble together with his expressive, yet concise contributions. Everything hangs together well on an album that quickly becomes one of those records you can't help turning to for an infusion of good, well-executed jazz. **Stuart Nicholson**

Jamie Baum
What Times Are These

Sunnyside/Bandcamp (CD, DL)

★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Jamie Baum (f), Jonathan Finlayson (t), Chris Komer (frhn), Sam Sadigursky (as, cl, bcl), Brad Shepik (g), Luis Perdomo (p, kys), Ricky Rodriguez (b, el b), Jeff Hirshfield (d), Keita Ogawa (perc), Theo Bleckmann, Sara Serpa, Aubrey Johnson and Kokayi (v). Rec. date not stated

Jamie Baum's fifth recording with her incredible Septet+ ensemble sees the New York-based flute player and composer dipping her toes for the first time into the world of spoken word and art song. Seven of Baum's 10 compositions here respond to works by eminent 20th and 21st-century female poets – Adrienne Rich, Marge Piercy, Tracy K. Smith, Lucille Clifton, and Naomi Shihab Nye.

A constellation of vocal luminaries joins Baum on this audacious sonic journey, with Theo Bleckmann, Sara Serpa, Aubrey Johnson, and Kokayi infusing each song with a unique timbral and emotional resonance.

The three instrumental pieces illustrate Baum's remarkable ear for textural detail and her singular approach to the layering of material. Each begins with just a single musical line – an insistent, hammered out quarter note in the piano on 'In The Light of Day', a sorrowing trumpet line on 'Dreams', a double bass ostinato on 'In The Light of Day' – to which extra layers are added incrementally to create a glowing polyphonic web of sound.

Beautifully recited and sung by trumpeter Jonathan Finlayson and vocalist Aubrey Johnson respectively, Tracy K. Smith's 'An Old Story' packs a hugely visceral punch in its portrayal of our imagined destruction ("The worst in us having taken

over and broken the rest utterly down"). Inspired by Bertolt Brecht's noted poem 'To Those Born After' written on the eve of World War II, Adrienne Rich's 1995 poem 'What Kinds of Times Are These' receives a compelling treatment by Baum, with Sara Serpa's plaintive vocal contrasting effectively with guitarist Brad Shepik's punchy solo. Serpa also excels in Naomi Shihab Nye's heartbreaking 'My Grandmother in the Stars' ("It is possible we will not meet again on earth. To think this fills my throat with dust."); Adrienne Rich's 'In Those Years' features a remarkable a cappella introduction from vocalist Theo Bleckmann, while Baum herself recites Marge Piercy's paean to perseverance, 'To Be Of Use', strikingly coloured by piano and clarinet. Sitting right at the heart of the album, Kokayi's performance of Lucille Clifton's 'sorrow song' is one of the most powerful things you'll hear this year. **Peter Quinn**

Black power!

Black Art Jazz Collective
Truth to Power

High Note Records HN 7353 (CD, DL) ★★★★

Wayne Escoffery (ts), Jeremy Pelt, Josh Evans, Wallace Roney Jnr. (tpt), James Burton III (tb), Xavier Davis, Victor Gould (p), Vincente Archer, Rashaan Carter (b), Johnathan Blake and Mark Whitfield Jnr (d). Rec. May 2023

The Black Art Jazz Collective mark their 10th anniversary with a stirring collection of originals recorded by two different line-ups over two days. Lean, muscular arrangements, a sonorous front line and vibrant rhythms confirm Jazz Messenger's roots. Strong personalities and drummers Johnathan Blake and Mark Whitfield deliver the contemporary twist.

'Truth to Power' finds trumpeters Jeremy Pelt, Josh Evans and the impressive Wallace Roney Jnr in an honours-even trumpet joust; written by tenor saxophonist Wayne Escoffery, it marks Pelt's departure, and introduces his replacements. Otherwise, the album presents a front line of Escoffery, the band's mainstay and founder, alongside Pelt and trombonist James Burton supported by rhythm sections old and new.

The album opens with lean piano voicings over Vincente Archer's pedal-point bass introducing 'Black Heart''s warm narrative arc. 'The Fabricator' is next, with pianist Xavier Davis now playing Fender Rhodes. As the piece unfolds at a confident Blake-fuelled strut, sonorous brass confirms the album's sonic palette and cleanly articulated solos the band's improvising prowess. Later, the established line-up delivers a fine-tuned waltz, which digs in at speed and ends the set with a blues.

The current rhythm section is featured on three compositions plus the album's title track. Drummer Whitfield continues Blake's urbane power and pyrotechnic drive, and with pianist Victor Gould and bassist Rashaan Carter equally accomplished and in style, the transition is seamless. For confirmation, just check out their playing on Pelt's gorgeous ballad, 'Soliloquy (for Sidney Poitier)'. **Mike Hobart**

Owen Broder
Hodges Front and Center Vol. Two

Outside In Music OiM 2402L ★★★★

Owen Broder (as, bs), Riley Mulherkar (t), Carmen Staaf (p), Barry Stephenson III (b) and Bryan Carter (d). Rec. 10-11 September 2021

We took note of Broder's *Volume 1* in *Jazzwise* 278 and liked it. As the blurb puts it, "the album strikes a sublime balance between honouring the sound and styles of Johnny Hodges' original recordings while infusing these classic tunes with a modern and vibrant feel". Fair enough, for that's pretty much what we get to hear, these present-day modernists seemingly at ease with a series of Hodges-aligned pieces, many authored by the great man.

'Used To Be A Duke' opens with saxophone flourish and a trumpet fanfare before settling into a fast-moving run-through, Staaf nimble in solo, drums understated, pert riffs alongside. 'Wabash Blues' was a highlight of *Back to Back*, the immortal Ducal small group album that inspired Broder and his friends, Broder's sibilant alto on this version nearer to Paul Desmond than JH but in the pocket all the way, Mulherkar chirruping boldly over the Latin rhythm. 'Back Beat', another Hodges swinger, dates from his encounter with Gerry Mulligan and ticks away nicely, good chorded piano to start with, the evocative ensemble riff a delight, the trumpet relaxed yet exploratory, pinched notes and all, Broder's light-touch baritone fitting in well ahead of Staaf's near-Ducal piano, Stephenson steadying the ship.

'St Louis Blues' is a tad more solemn but soon finds its groove, Staaf open-minded, Broder taking the theme, with Mulherkar as his co-worker, the alto solo suitably funky, the trumpeter's long-note entry similarly potent. Broder is at his most-Hodges-like on 'Stompy Jones;' Staaf recalling Duke's memorable piano interjections, Mulherkar muted. Feel-good music maybe, but executed with purpose and respect. More please. **Peter Vacher**

Taylor Eigsti
Plot Armor

GroundUP GUM0324TECD (CD, LP, DL) ★★★

Taylor Eigsti, Maya Kronfeld (p, ky), Gretchen Parlato, Becca Stevens (v), Ben Wendel, Dayna Stephens (s), Charles Altura, Julian Lage (g), David "DJ" Ginyard, Harish Raghavan (b); Oscar Seaton, Jr., Kendrick Scott (d), Stephanie Yu, Corinne Sobolewski, Mia Barcia-Colombo, Jules Levy (string qt) Rebecca Kleinmann (fl) plus guests Lisa Fischer (v) and Terence Blanchard (t). Rec. date not stated

Taylor Eigsti is a Californian-born pianist-composer living in New York, who's been turning heads with his wittily effervescent piano contributions to high level bands such as those of Terence Blanchard, Kendrick Scott (Oracle) and Ben Wendel.

The high-energy, contemporary crossover approach on his recordings as leader meanwhile, have won him admiration among both Grammy academy voters and those with an ear for more genre-dissolving, contemporary jazz hybrids.

Plot Armor is his ninth album and it builds – slightly expanding and refining the sound canvas – on his 2021 Grammy triumph *Tree Falls*. Mashing together such elements as electric jazz, Americana/fusion-pop influenced orchestral rock soundscapes and hip hop rhythms and flanked by an impressive pool of musicians that are also frequent collaborators, Eigsti utilises well his experience with regional US orchestras by writing and arranging for a string section whose main source of inspiration is the outstanding Turtle Island String Quartet, with whom Eigsti collaborates as part of Terence Blanchard's E-Collective.

There's a mellower, more pared-down approach to ballads perhaps so as not to sweeten them up too much, with non-instrumentals sung by a few emotive singular vocalists, Gretchen Parlato being the most engaging here while one of the few non-originals 'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered' is reinvented but as a slightly bloated pop-fusion ballad.

Nevertheless, the recording is stylishly yet organically arranged and produced. Eigsti writes attractive themes and his upbeat, tastefully flamboyant charms as composer-improviser and some tasty contributions on guitar (Charles Altura/Julian Lage) and saxophone (Ben Wendel) hit the spot. It seems those Grammys are gonna just keep on coming. **Selwyn Harris**

Jamie Baum

Photo: Erika Kapin

Ulrich Elbracht/ Zoltan Dekany
Silhouettes

Lamplight Social 8720996970416 (CD, DL)

★★★★

Ulrich Elbracht (g) and Zoltan Dekany (b). Rec. 2023

A well-considered little gem from the Lamplight Social label based in Leeds, run by saxophonist James Mainwaring, best known for his work with the Mercury-nominated Roller Trio. It is the second recording from the Hungarian bass player Zoltan Dekany and German guitarist Ulrich Elbracht, formerly faculty members at Leeds College of Music.

This all-acoustic duo perform original compositions, six by Elbracht, five by Dekany, that seem consciously (or unconsciously) suited to reveal their strengths (some pieces had been written with larger ensembles in mind). This is low-key and unhurried, their melodically based lyricism changes hands to best serve the needs of the overall performances rather than a rote exchange of solos in the manner of "you take 32 bars, I'll take 32 bars and back to theme and out" stuff.

It all goes to prove that jazz need not always be a gratuitous display of virtuosity and can equally accommodate chamber group concepts, if only more people would try it. **Stuart Nicholson**

Adam Forkelid
Turning Point

Prophone PCD335 (CD, DL) ★★★

Adam Forkelid (p), Carl Mörner Ringström (g), Niklas Fernqvist (b) and Daniel Fredriksson (d). Rec. 7 February 2023

Past the opening title track, there is a certain Nordic melancholy to *Turning Point*, as pianist Adam Forkelid contemplates the inevitable turning points in life's cycle with which we are all confronted, the choices we make, for better or worse, and how they ultimately define us. It is of course the eternal head scratcher that has occupied novelists, poets and movie makers but how does this perennial philosophical Gordian Knot unravel in this jazz interpretation?

Well, as often is the case, the grandeur of aspiration is not met by the music, which is often best encountered free from programmatic baggage. What we are left with then is a nice little set of eight numbers, which if you wandered into a jazz club or performance space anywhere in Europe, would add up to a satisfying evening. Nothing pretentious, *outré*, strained or forced, and while you would not be scrambling to be first in the queue to get the bandleader's autograph, you'd probably come back and support the band next time they were in town.

It's music that returns the social function to jazz, where you sit down with friends have a chat, tune in and tune out of the music, which conveys an agreeable contemporary feel. Paul Motian, referring to his time with the Bill Evans Trio, said that "what people don't realise today was how loud the audience were" at the Village Vanguard, a true jazz club ambience he loved, people relaxing and enjoying the vibe. Nothing wrong with that. Count me in! **Stuart Nicholson**

Tim Garland
Moment of Departure

Ubuntu UBU0155 (2 CD, DL) ★★★★

Tim Garland (ts, ss, b cl, cond), Gwilym Simcock (p), Asaf Sirkis (d, perc), Thomas Gould (vln), Yazz Ahmed (t), and the Strings of the Britten Sinfonia with Clio Gould (ldr) and the Strings of the London Studio Orchestra, with John Mills (ldr). Rec. 2023 and 2024

A double CD set that effectively celebrates the return of the Lighthouse Trio for a 20th anniversary tour, and, if things go to plan, a return to the touring circuits.

All of which is most welcome, especially as Lighthouse, in its heyday, was being spoken of by influential German and Scandinavian jazz critics as a band that could potentially become a major voice in European jazz. Conflicting career commitments put an end to that, but all three return older and wiser – Garland as a result of his work with Chick Corea, Simcock as a result of his association with Pat Metheny and Sirkis with Soft Machine, Emma Rawicz and artists associated with the MoonJune label.

They bring a lot to the table, and are featured in trio on the first compact disc on a series of Garland originals that presents jazz improvisation of the highest order. While Garland's long-form settings for strings and the integration of the written and the improvised are compositionally and conceptually impeccable, Lighthouse steal the show.

First time around, the trio never quite realised that their music was greater than the sum of the musicians making it. If *Moment of Departure* is anything to go by, this time around the same holds good with brass knobs on. **Stuart Nicholson**

Amy's everything

Amy Gadiaga
All Black Everything

Jazz re:freshed JRF 0054 (LP, DL) ★★★★

Amy Gadiaga (v, b), Joseph Oti (t), Luke Bacchus (p), Simon Lamb (d), with Tom Waters (as) and Christ-Stéphane Boizi (tb). Rec. date not stated

All Black Everything has been an awfully long time coming, but it's been well worth the wait. Singer, bassist, composer, arranger and producer Amy Gadiaga has been threatening to break through for quite a while, despite getting noticed with her 2022 single 'Everything I Do', but if there's any justice in the world, this 26-minute EP is the release that should finally do it.

Like all the best music these days, it defies categorisation, but what all five tunes on this EP have in common is sublime melody, hipness and warmth. And despite all the danceable grooves, they don't just sit on them: Gadiaga has written contrasting sections, just like Duke Ellington, in which her long-standing band members all get the chance to shine: Bacchus is on fiery form on 'Paloma Negra', Oti's trumpet stabbing the air, Gadiaga's vocal harmonies soaring above it all. 'I Soar When I'm Alone' rides along on a soulful piano vamp, riding out again on Oti's catchy trumpet figure. 'Full Sun' is one of those tunes you think you've always known, driven along by the relentless Simon Lamb, and Gadiaga taking a nifty bass solo amidships.

Photo: Hasna Bramble

On 'Petite' she mutates into the smoky, purring Parisian nightclub singer - Melody Gardot style - that she could have become if she'd decided to stay in her home city of Paris rather than settle in London.

Amy Gadiaga reveals a coiled sophistication in all departments. Both her writing and singing sound increasingly confident, distinctive and personal, and she delivers the songs in several languages. She's the real deal, and this mini-album is a quantum leap. **Peter Jones**

Alexander Hawkins/Sofia Jernberg
Musho

Intakt CD240 (CD, DL) ★★★★

Alexander Hawkins (p) and Sofia Jernberg (v). Rec. 26 September 2023

Sofia Jernberg and Alexander Hawkins first performed together at Amsterdam's Bimhuis in 2016, under the name Musho – an Amharic word meaning 'sad song'. Jernberg's work frequently takes her to the outer edges of vocal technique, while Hawkins does much the same on his chosen instrument. The pair are thus extremely well suited to each other.

On the thrillingly unusual *Musho*, they draw on their shared affinity for the music of Ethiopia, having both honed their musical languages in the company of elder statesmen from that country: Jernberg with Hailu Mergia, and Hawkins with the great Mulatu Astatke. But don't expect an overtly 'Ethiopian-sounding' record; or indeed a record that sounds like

Joonas Haavisto/ Kestutis Vaiginis
Moon Bridge

Eight Islands Records EIRD-8008 (CD, DL) ★★★★

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Joonas Haavisto (p, el p) and Kestutis Vaiginis (ss, ts).
Rec. October 2022

One of Finland's most exciting jazz talents, Joonas Haavisto is perhaps best-known as a collaborator with the likes of singer-composer Susanna Aleksandra (2021's superb *The Siren*) and guitarist Jukka Tolonen, as well as work with his own Trio; Lithuanian Kestutis Vaiginis, meanwhile, has led his own groups and has worked with a diverse range of musicians, including Russian bassist Boris Koslov and Polish trumpeter Piotr Schmidt.

This talented pair's musical history goes back to 2006, when they met in Lithuania at the Jazz Improvizacija (a major piano competition, which Joonas won that year). Ever since, they have rehearsed and performed together, establishing a strong musical connection – as evidenced by this splendid album. The beautifully-recorded (and packaged) *Moon Bridge* is, as far as I'm aware, their first studio recording, but the 16 years of

playing together before entering the studio has really paid off.

There's a crystalline stillness to this music in its use of space, wispy but insistent melody, and sacral tone, but dig deeper and you'll find an assertiveness and confidence to the duo's playing, both solo and with each other, that lifts this from 'good' to 'remarkable'.

The original compositions are outstanding: Joonas' ominous 'Zenobia' is powerful and pulsating, while Kestutis' 'Random Moments' and 'One Of Those Full Moons' are wonderful explorations of the textural possibilties of sax and electric piano. 'Waiting' is delightful dancing gossamer , 'Opener' contemplative and 'Bonus Track' sparkles like sunlight through a fountain. A cover of Wayne Shorter's 'Miyako' is simply exquisite, and the take on Billy Strayhorn's warhorse 'Lush Life' takes the tune to places even its composer probably wasn't aware of. A magnificent album full of great writing and musicianship. **Kevin Whitlock**

anything you've heard before.

Using traditional Ethiopian (but also Armenian and Swedish) song as a starting point, *Musho* moves between exploratory abstract improv and 'Afro-European' folk. There's a profound, almost searing, spirituality about the music here, as evidenced by the opening 'Adwa'; the sounds are also primal (on an interpretation of the old Swedish folk song 'Mannelig'.) Elsewhere, there's brilliant use of space in 'Willow, Willow'.

Sometimes *Musho* soars, sometimes it's contemplative; by turns crystalline and dense, it feels like a very personal project for the outrageously prolific Hawkins, one of the best things he's ever involved himself with. More than most albums you'll hear this year, it gets better and better, revealing new textures and layers of meaning with every listen.

Kevin Whitlock

Gilad Hekselman
Life, At The Village Vanguard

La Reserve LR056001 (2LP, DL) ★★★★

Gilad Hekselman (g), Shai Maestro (p), Larry Grenadier (b) and Eric Harland (d).
Rec. 30 March – 2 April 2022

The Israeli NYC-based guitarist-composer Hekselman has earned a fast-growing international reputation mixing a spacey Frisell-like Americana vibe with his own eloquently intuitive storytelling improvisation and elasticated lyrical tone.

On *Life, At The Village Vanguard* on Brooklyn-based label La Reserve, he exhibits his wonderfully nuanced dynamics and phrasing, plus flair for weaving a beguiling melody in shifting contexts alongside a mouth-watering contemporary jazz lineup that tend to serve up the right thing at the right time. On the title track he creates a delicately minimalist tapestry with Israeli compatriot Shai Maestro on piano and ear-catching takes on Coltrane's 'Equinox' and songbook standard 'Everything Happens to Me' fit perfectly among a set of originals, half of which come from his outstanding previous Edition label studio release *Far Star*.

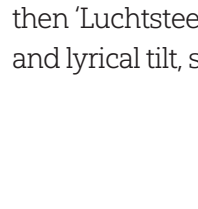
Throughout this pulsating live recording, Hekselman shows why he's one of the most significant trailblazers of jazz guitar today.

Selwyn Harris

Louise van den Heuvel
Sonic Hug

WERF 242LP (LP, DL) ★★★

Louise van den Heuvel (b, v), Sam Comerford (reeds), Henrik Lasure (p, Hammond organ) and Daniel Jonkers (d, perc).
Rec. 19-22 June, 19-21, 26 September 2023



First found in the linear-improvising Dishwasher_ trio, Dutch electric bassist Heuvel also works with Aka Moon drummer Stéphane Galland, and now makes her solo debut. Entrenched on the Belgian scene, she's gathered a band that will probably call itself Sonic Hug when it goes out on tour.

Heuvel opens with a vocal number, the first of three, sounding somewhat like [alternative folk-rockers] This Is The Kit in her sensitivity. A tender folk mist curls around the glade. It's atypical, as most of the tunes will be instrumental. Heuvel's resonantly harmonic bass style is reminiscent of those fretless 1970s masters Percy Jones or Bill MacCormick. Sam Comerford is best when choosing tenor saxophone or bass clarinet from his arsenal, while Henrik Lasure commands the contrasts of acoustic piano and Hammond.

Space is savoured, as the expertly sequenced tunes gradually rise on a curve of graceful activity. There's a gentle examination of texture, with organ key-shards and tenor soft-drag, magnified for an intimate reed-sound. With 'Kusjeswekker', they move towards a hymnal Tord Gustavsen character, then 'Luchtsteen' has a soulful and lyrical tilt, steam amassing, with a captivating speed-switch on piano, sliding across the beat. *Sonic Hug*'s solos really explore the territory, licking the walls of each tune, as another hike in pace governs 'Pingi'. 'Kwartleven' is mysterious and enquiring, with a hesitant development, this band sympathetically feeling their way along a dark passageway, a team possessing maximum responsiveness. **Martin Longley**

Hannah Horton
Live in Soho

Self-release/Bandcamp HHR002 (CD, DL)
★★★

Hannah Horton (ts, bs), Tim Lapthorn (p), Rob Statham (el b) and Nic France (d).
Rec. January 2023

This album, Hannah Horton's second, was recorded in front of a live audience. It takes some guts to release a live selection where it's harder to edit, and hence less room to hide. The repertoire is suitably varied: she mixes up the styles - a bit of funk here, a bit of swing there, and on Gil Evans' 'Las Vegas Tango', a bit of... well, you get the idea.

In recent years the baritone has been largely relegated to the big band reeds section, so it's refreshing to hear it out front as the lead instrument, Horton alternating between it and the tenor. One of the qualities of *Live in Soho* is that it not only features original tunes but existing compositions that are lesser-known: Chick Corea's 'Sea Journey', with dazzling bass work from Statham, and the aforementioned 'Las Vegas Tango', adorned with Lapthorn's rippling keys, being the standout examples. The most well-known tune, 'Feed the Birds' is rendered in an uplifting township-style 12/8, while 'Keep Walking' likewise struts along the street with determined optimism, enlivened by one of Horton's most accomplished solos.

That's really the story of the album as a whole - straightforward, bright and positive. **Peter Jones**

Max Light

Photo: Luke Marantz

James Hudson
Moonray

Self-release/ECN Music JH696970CD (CD, DL)

★★★★

James Hudson (v), Tom Walsh (t, flhn), Tom Smith (a, saxes, bcl), Nick Fitch (g), Joe Hill (p), Jack Tustin (b), Luke Tomlinson (d, perc) and Ralph Wyld (vb) plus strings.
Rec. 27-28 February and 17 April 2023

Inspired by the work of George Shearing and the albums of the Marty Paich Dek-Tette with Mel Tormé, this follow-up to James Hudson's acclaimed 2021 debut album *Tomorrow* brings together 10 meticulously reimagined songbook classics. With nicely varied tempos and textures and engaging arrangements courtesy of Tom Smith, Hudson navigates the material with a palpable sense of warmth and enjoyment. The scene-setting opener 'On A Clear Day' is lit up by Tom Walsh's trumpet solo and lush strings, and there's more fine soloing from Smith and Hill in Cole Porter's 'From This Moment On'.

Ralph Wyld's fine vibes playing adds a touch of magic to 'Moonray', a jewel from Artie Shaw's repertoire, while Hudson's extremely beautiful take on 'That's All', first recorded by Nat 'King' Cole in 1953, proves to be one of the album's standouts. In addition to the mid-tempo swing of the Rodgers and Hart evergreen 'Sing For Your Supper', Hudson impresses in an energising take on 'Four', the timeless Miles Davis tune in which Jon Hendricks' appended lyrics extol the virtues of truth, honour, happiness and love.

The vocalist also showcases his fine balladeering skills in 'Careless' and gives a sparkling reading of the Bobby Hebb anthem, 'Sunny'. Hudson's mellifluous vocals intertwining with Wyld's vibes in Hoagy Carmichael's 'The Nearness Of You' provide the admirably understated coda. **Peter Quinn**

Beck Hunters with Laura Cole and John Pope
From Wolves To Water

New Jazz & Improvised Music NEWJAiM19 (CD, DL) ★★★

Mick Beck (ts, bn, whistles), Laura Cole (p), Anton Hunter (g, effects), Johnny Hunter (d, perc) and John Pope (b). Rec. 1 October 2022

Double-reed instruments such as the duduk, shehnai and rhaita have long held a fascination for progressive free-jazz musicians and other improvisers seeking to reach past hidebound western timbres and techniques. So, it's rather surprising that the humble bassoon remains so underused. In the hands of Sheffield-based reedsman, Mick Beck, it produces a dizzying array of sounds, from ominous purrs and growls to an insistent buzz, to a kind of medieval proto-trance music.

Even if that were all this session had going for it, it would be worth checking out. Actually, it's a densely packed and highly rewarding 36-minute live set just bursting with ideas, performed by a cross-generational gathering of some of the north of England's top players. Beck has played in the trio formation with the affable Hunter brothers for some years now and, here, they're joined by double bassist John Pope and pianist Laura Cole for some very convincing energy music.

On tenor sax, Beck has a thick and lustrous tone, which frequently spurs the quintet on to dig deep into rich seams of bunched muscularity – with Anton Hunter splurging forth some particularly gnarly electric guitar. And when was the last time you heard a swanee whistle solo? **Daniel Spicer**

Gary Husband
Songs of Love and Solace

Self-release/BFD Records BFD618 (CD, DL)

★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Gary Husband (p). Rec. April 2008, April 2023

A highly promising classical pianist in his youth, Husband's teacher hurled his beloved (vinyl) copy of Bill Evans' *Live at the Village Vanguard* across the room, raging against the youngster's interest in jazz.

Almost in retaliation, the young pianist took up the drums against a world of exclusivity, hierarchy, and pointless competition. Piano remained almost a secret passion, and it was Billy Cobham who tempted Husband to start playing keys live, especially piano. And with *Songs of Love and Solace* (the clue's rather in the title) Husband revisits that youthful passion, but now, he's in a position in which no-one will throw his love back in his face.

Some songs are especially evocative of Husband's teen experiences, yet with nary a note of nostalgia: the Beatles' 'Can't Buy Me Love' brims with a sublimated anger; Jim Webb's 'Wichita Lineman' could sing the very birds from the trees in its yearning. His own compositions meanwhile are richly lyric, yet always with a hint of tears beneath: 'Trying to Get the Feeling Again' is intimate, graceful, with that beauteous capacity of Bill Evans to pierce the heart.

Interestingly there's only one Evans cover, 'My Bells', opened out and thoughtful; but the American's spirit hovers around much of the music, especially across standards like 'Close Enough for Love'.

But if there's an album that Husband's work most resonates with, it's probably Jarrett's *The Melody at Night, with You* which shares a similar sense of longing yet isolation, love yet out of reachness. A special recording indeed. **Andy Robson**

Max Light
Chaotic Neutral

AGS Recordings/Bandcamp (DL) ★★★★

Max Light (g), Julian Shore (p), Walter Stinson (b), Steven Crammer (d) and Caleb Curtis (stritch). Rec. 29 November 2023

In 2019, guitar-star judges, including Pat Metheny, John Scofield and Lionel Loueke, embraced the precocious arrival of Max Light, one of the instrument's latest and most gifted rising stars, at that year's Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz's International Guitar Competition - and though on that occasion Light was runner-up to the young Russian prodigy Evgeny Pobozhiy, the exposure set the now Brooklyn-based virtuoso on his way.

Chaotic Neutral is Light's third recording as a leader, and it affirms how close to a finished article - albeit a fresh and forward-looking one - he increasingly sounds.

The opening 'Pathos' establishes Light's signature characteristics - spiky, short-burst melodies delivered with glistening precision, skid-turn rhythm-changes, a warmly-rounded tone, and gracefully skimming double-time improv shapes once he eases out into passages of swing. The fluent Caleb Curtis' stritch (it's a straight-horn alto sax Rahsaan Roland Kirk used to favour) unfolds the lilting theme of 'Vals Quartzite', framing Light's delicate fills, while the title track is a knotty, stop-start theme over a piano/bass ostinato that develops in edgy guitar breaks and a bass solo from Walter Stinson that mirrors his leader's meticulous agility.

'Is It True' is a dreamily lyrical feature for Light and that fine pianist Julian Shore, 'Brown Bear' a rhythm-stuttering piece steadied into lyricism by Caleb Curtis, and the racing finale 'Things' gives both Light and Shore a dazzling free run across classic bop-changes territory.

Perhaps Light might loosen the strictures of a few knottily-recurring rhythm patterns to let the improv stray more freely, but the splicing of avant-swing and more jagged contemporary guitar thinking that have made Allan Holdsworth and Kurt Rosenwinkel significant models for him indicate that Max Light might already be emerging as a model for the generation around the corner. **John Fordham**

Monsieur MÂLÂ
Monsieur MÂLÂ

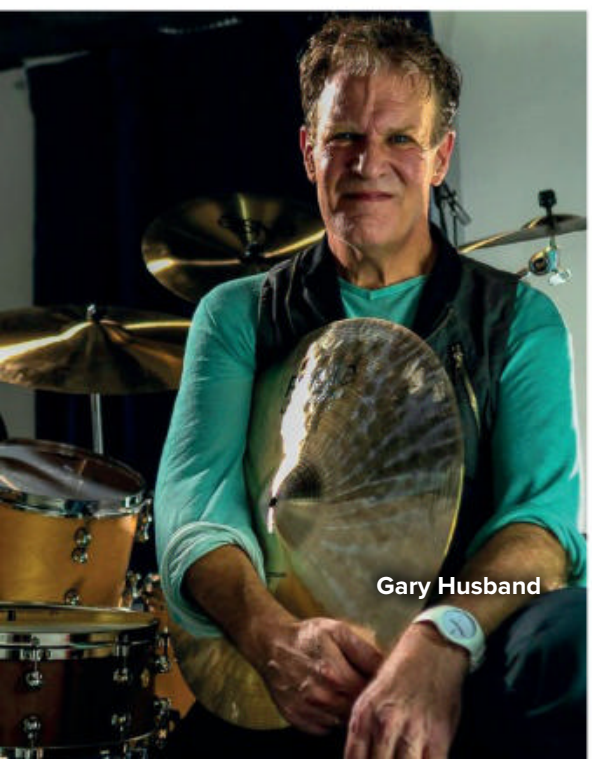
Bridge The Gap/Bandcamp (DL) ★★★

Balthazar Naturel (s), Nicholas Vella (ky), Robin Antunes (vn, mand), Swaéli Mbappé (b), Yoann Danier (d), EU.CLIDES and Anna Kova (v). Rec. date not stated

In the style of American band Snarky Puppy, Monsieur MÂLÂ combines virtuosic musicianship with an almost unlimited array of influences. Following two stand-out EPs and a handful of singles, their eponymous debut album paints a colourfully eclectic portrait of their city, Paris, as a natural progression of their own distinctive cultural identities.

Opening track 'Storyteller' combines the sonic textures of Weather Report with the swirling euphoria of Return To Forever, complete with Pastorius-like fills by bassist Swaéli Mbappé. Meanwhile, 'al Fayhaa' moves into new sonic territories, with Yoann Denier's driving, gnawa-adjacent drumming culminating in a wonderfully intense, angular ensemble riff. 'Fly fly' is another stylistic breath of fresh air, this time hailing from Brazil, replete with funky samba rhythms and fast-paced, Hermeto Pascoal-like melodies. Elsewhere, the band gets more electric. Dark synth textures characterise both 'Carnaval', which features a spacey keyboard breakdown courtesy of Nicholas Vella, and the glitchy, more cinematic 'Nguinya Mulema'.

For some, the album listening experience might be slightly disconcerting in its maximalist approach to styles and genres. But for those who are prepared, it's an imaginative and uninhibited journey of 21st Century sounds, masterfully done by five first-rate musicians. **Gail Tasker**



Gary Husband

Album Interview

Alina Bzhezhinska and Tony Kofi
Altera Vita

BBE BBE779ACD/LP (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★

Alina Bzhezhinska (hp, perc), Tony Kofi (ts, perc, kalimba) and Muriel Grossman (tanpura). Rec. 29-30 August 2023

Three rings on a singing bowl, and *Altera Vita* unfurls slowly, languorously, into being, a sonic lotus flower in a spiritual jazz garden planted by the likes of Pharoah Sanders and Alice and John Coltrane.

This spare, superb duo album might have come from on high, such is its soul-cleansing timeliness, the way it transfixes the listener across six tracks whose intentions, spelled out after opener 'Tabula Rasa: Blank Slate', are titled like offerings ('Anima: Breathe'; 'Audite Me: Hear Me').

The symbiosis between harpist Bzhezhinska and tenor king Kofi has long been clear to all who've experienced their previous collaborations, most notably with the former's HipHarp Collective. But this recording takes both further. Laid down over two fecund days at London's Fish Factory Studios, *Altera Vita* sparkles with the sort of improvisational magic expected of players at the top of their game, with passages changing form, finding flow, conjuring shapes and angles, in ways surprising, soothing, thoughtful and rousing.

The harp's percussive prowess is echoed by details from chimes, bowls and kalimba thumb piano, and the instrument is determinedly presented on a par with the sax - which weaves golden lines through the more meditative string passages (deftly enhanced by tanpura drone on 'Audite Me') while delivering sunbursts of power on the eponymous closer, a Kofi-penned homage to Sanders involving elegant call-and-response. Astral travelling indeed. **Jane Cornwell**

Jane Cornwell talks to Alina and Tony about their new collaboration...

Is there a story behind the title track, 'Altera Vita'?
Tony: We'd both met Pharoah [Sanders] in 2017 when we all performed a concert commemorating John and Alice Coltrane. When I heard that Pharoah had passed away [24 September 2022], I wrote this piece soon afterwards. We only practised the last phrase. It's a statement of the unity for our voices, with the harmonic note at the end reflecting the vibration of the travelling soul. We recorded it as a single and the overwhelmingly positive response suggested that we should go back to the studio and continue the journey.

Has your working relationship changed through this project?
Alina: *Altera Vita* was created at the right time. Tony and I have worked on many different projects together and have co-created two albums deeply inspired by Alice and John Coltrane, and by Dorothy Ashby's commitment to the jazz harp and to civil rights activism. The intensity of the music and our personal values and characters played a role in shaping what we have to say. This is an organic response to what is around us, and how it affects us. We also wanted to pay tribute to Master Pharoah Sanders.

What was the intention behind using hand percussion instruments and tanpura drone?
Alina: All of them are deeply rooted in our traditions - both African and Eastern European. Tony loves playing kalimba, this magical sound that connects him to his ancestors. Opening the album with the sound of the bell brings the listeners to the present moment. As in recordings by Alice Coltrane, tanpura creates a meditative vibe to support the music.

Tell me about some other tracks and their messages. And why the tenor?
Tony: 'Tu Vides: You See' is about bringing to life our inner vision. 'Audite Me: Hear Me' highlights being open to communication, and to being heard yourself. Playing exclusively on tenor saxophone meant I drew on influences from greats including Joe Henderson, Pharaoh Sanders, John Coltrane and Albert Ayler.

In what ways does the album showcase the versatility of the harp?
Alina: The harp is an orchestra in itself. Playing in a duo allows for endless experiments. The harp is a vulnerable and exposed space; I'm listening to Tony's bold playing and matching my sound accordingly. Tony told me early on to use my chops and experience and just play. That's why the music on this album is so honest. Tony describes it as a cry of the soul.

***How do* you feel your musical partnership has progressed and how is it evidenced on the album? What do you hope people will take away?**
Alina: Our friendship and musical partnership has been taken to another level now we're working as a duo. We both make an effort to be humble and patient with each other. We have many years of respective experience as band leaders but the music we create as a duo is helping us to be better people and value each other even more. The album is like a pause button to make us reflect, re-set, be present. It's a reflection of general human experience - but also, of our two lives. Mine and Tony's. It expresses everything we've been through separately and together: love, loss, friendship. Even more love.

Raymond MacDonald
Desire Lines

multi.modal multi.modal05 (CD, DL)

★★★

Raymond MacDonald (as, ss).
Rec. date not stated

MacDonald knows about improvisation. He's been making it since the 1990s as a saxophonist, including as a founder member of the Glasgow Improvisers' Orchestra in 2002.

His musical CV reveals an ongoing series of collaborative performances documented in some 60 recordings. As an academic music psychologist, focused on the relationships between music, improvisation, community and health, he's written papers and even given a TED talk. Lately he has documented exploratory interactive collaborations with an AI avatar in his 2023 book *Conversations with Chimère*. The one thing he hadn't done – until now, that is – was make a solo improvised recording, possibly because of his conviction that improvisation is fundamentally a social and collaborative process.

Envisaging it as a collaboration with producer Richard Youngs, however, persuaded him that 'even a solo is social' and thus the three tracks on *Desire Lines* were achieved. 'Track 1' is based on a single breath lasting 21 minutes, a relentless downhill ski run combining babbling alto sax arpeggios and slapping pulses in an adrenaline-fuelled counterpoint until MacDonald finally collapses into laughter.

'Track 2', recorded on soprano "just a quick glug of water" after the first, has the feel of an ethnographic recording with breathily fluted melodic phrases evolving over a similar pulsing root. 'Track 3' is an exploratory journey of the instrument itself. It's classic free blowing stuff and an obvious reference point would be the great Lol Coxhill, one of MacDonald's many past collaborators.

They may be short of the kind of melodic richness and rounded tone Macdonald is known for, but nevertheless the engaging post-minimalist structures underlying the pieces as they evolve gives them hypnotic depth. **Tony Benjamin**

Doubling down on bass
Christian McBride and Edgar Meyer
But Who's Going To Play The Melody?

Mack Avenue MAC1155 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Chrstian McBride and Edgar Meyer (b). Rec. date not stated

Team up one of the world's leading classical bassists with his counterpart from the jazz environment, and the results should be interesting. The opening two tracks here, with Meyer plucking neat ostinato bass patterns, with some percussive knocks and slaps, while McBride plays some quite remarkable bowed figures (and a fine pizzicato section in his own 'Barnyard Disturbance') seem initially to set a precedent for the rest of the album.

But with two such eminent and resourceful musicians, they are far too experienced and wily to stick to a formula. The finest moment – in complete contrast – is McBride's beautiful, sensitive bowed version of 'Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered' with Meyer accompanying him at the piano. The tables are turned for 'Lullaby for a Ladybug' with McBride at the keys, and Meyer up in cello register for the beautiful arco opening melody, before the tempo picks up and phrases buzz to and fro. The whole album is beautifully recorded with a vivid impression of being in the room with the two bassists, whose joint empathy for their main instrument is perfectly summed up on an absorbing version of 'Days of Wine and Roses'. **Alyn Shipton**

The Messthetics and James Brandon Lewis

The Messthetics And James Brandon Lewis
The Messthetics And James Brandon Lewis

Impulse! 5894589 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★

Anthony Pirog (g), Joe Lally (el b), Brendan Canty (d) and James Brandon Lewis (ts).
Rec. date not stated

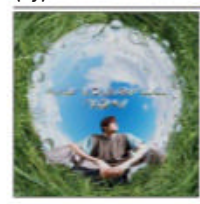
The Messthetics get maximum points for a great name, but that's not all they have in their favour. Drummer Brendan Canty and bassist Joe Lally are both former members of esteemed Washington DC punk band Fugazi, while guitarist Anthony Pirog is an excitingly experimental player who guested on saxophonist James Brandon Lewis' 2017 classic *No Filter.*

On paper, the union of all four individuals is a cross-genre affair but the result speaks more of a musical affinities and personalities that gel above all else. The songs range from snap and crunch rock to langourous ballads, such as 'Asthenia' in which the lyricism of horn and electric strings comes into its own. Instrumental pop with a noisy, thrashy character has a rich lineage that includes anybody from Material to Acoustic Ladyland via Cuong Vu, and Defunkt, and The Messthetics-Brandon Lewis put their own spin on the history. When they branch out in the most unexpected directions, as in the Balkan gypsy funk of 'That Thang' they are hard to resist in a front room, or one also imagines, on a sweat-stained dance floor. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Anatole Muster
Wonderful Now

Self-release (CD, DL) ★★★

Anatole Muster (acc, midi-accordion, ky) plus guests Louis Cole, Mackwood (d), Telemakus (p), Juliana Chahayed (v), Safwan Shoptoe Chowdhury, M Field (g) and Mitchell Peterson (ky). Rec. date not stated



Accordionist Anatole Muster may still be in his early twenties but he's not hanging about. Swiss-born and London-based he's already made whistle-stop appearances at international events such as Montreux Jazz's Autumn of Music Festival, and notched up sold-out shows at LA's Minaret Records and Ronnie Scott's. He's also released a string of guest-packed neo-fusion tinged singles with Hiromi/John McLaughlin bassist Hadrien Feraud and Californian lofi keys master Kiefer among others.

So it's perhaps no surprise his debut album packs in 10 richly flavoured songs in under 30 minutes, each an appetiser for an expanded live incarnation. Its irony-free title, *Wonderful Now*, also reflects the sonic smile that permeates much of the music, which busts with jazztronica-fuelled energy such as on opener 'Dance With Me' and the drum-n-bass beats of 'Girl In My Dreams'. The latter is one of several cuts on which Muster also sings with a knowing but effective melancholy.

It's his clever production that rules overall though, with several talented Gen Z muso guests overshadowed by star LA drummer Louis Cole, who artfully batters his way through the chopped chords of 'Auntie Mabel'. Like most digital natives, Muster embraces all genres but his nimble accordion work is outstanding and this polished genre-hopping jazz-pop context is the vernacular he and his audience understand.

If the studio slickness isn't your thing, then be sure to catch him live, where his effervescent playing really shines. **Mike Flynn**

Jasmine Myra
Rising

Gondwana GOND070 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Jasmine Myra (as, fl), Arran Kent (bcl), Jasper Green (ky), Ben Haskins (g), Alice Roberts (hp), Sam Quintana (b), George Hall (d, perc), Greg Burns (perc, cng, triangle), Isabella Baker, Lisa Meech (vln), Sophia Dignam (vla), Awen Blandford (clo) and Carmel Smickersgill (string arr). Rec. 30-31 August 2022, 12 January 2023

Jasmine Myra's music is reasonably considered spiritual jazz, a presumption invited by her presence on Matthew Halsall's Gondwana label, whose *lingua franca* is meditative minimalism and softly blissful elevation. She doesn't, though, quite fit the genre's cliched signifiers. Her flute on this second album's title track isn't, for instance, pastoral but it has a swaying rhythmic root. The song feels ceremonial, and Myra's alto is languidly relaxed, her tone burry, warm and light, a comforting, cushioning, counselling sound expressing her music's essence.

Myra's compositions meanwhile combine repetitive riffs with layered arrangements subtly reinforced by Halsall's production, even as the rhythm section tugs in lively, myriad directions. 'Knowingness' typifies the sectional yet liquid progress, as successive phases are renewed through shivers of strings and alto fanfares, until Arran Kent's lugubrious bass clarinet pulls into fiery solo focus. 'Glimmers'' subtly warping textures and hints even of Derrick May's Detroit techno masterwork 'Strings of Life' in its George Hall-led rhythmic surge signal another side. 'From Embers', though under three minutes, finds room for Myra's most serene sax solo, and brassy bass clarinet and strings whose massed, regal climax is like a phoenix ascending, before sinking back into stillness.

Myra at one point meant this to start the following, final track, 'How Tall the Mountains', which gives similar feelings more time and space, characteristically combining peace with restless, roiling energy, and ending with a spiritual samba.

Myra's debut *Horizons* (2022) was a moving album, where 'Words Left Unspoken' emerged as an imagined dialogue with her late grandmother, who she mourned long-distance during lockdown, its music moving in concentric circles, suggesting a still place of memorial and closure. *Rising*'s ongoing reckoning of mental health and musical dreams heads out from that place of consolation into new emotional sanctuaries, and a dancehall of the mind. Optimism and ambition have both been scaled up. **Nick Hasted**

John O'Gallagher
Beast

Whirlwind Recordings WR4821 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★

John O'Gallagher (as), Samuel Gapp (p), Zé Almedia (b) and João Lencastre (d) Rec. date not stated

Lisbon has a dynamic avant-garde scene and the capital of Portugal is also beautiful, not to mention relatively cheaper than other European cities. Somewhat inevitably, it attracts musicians from abroad, and US alto saxophonist John O'Gallagher moved there in 2021.

This concert is as good an advert for all of the above as could be hoped for. The band O'Gallagher leads comprises the excellent local drums and bass team, João Lencastre and Zé Almeida, as well as German pianist Samuel Gapp and they stand very much in the tradition of an intuitive, disciplined acoustic quartet that plays material which is harmonically detailed, if not dense as well as rhythmically loose and pliable.

A piece such as 'Quixotica', arguably the highlight of the set, has precisely the shifting sands character that makes much of the ability of the piano and reed to create aggressive, agitated flurries that eventually fall and float into stillness while the percussion supports the movements with tight punctuations on snare and cymbal which reinforce the impression of a flame that flickers rather than rages. But the fraught, spectral down tempo drift of 'Practically Speaking' in which O'Gallagher pushes his horn towards a Lacy-ish soprano vocabulary marks a dramatic change of mood and soundscape that says much about the band's introspective slant.

Enjoyable, interrogative music from an international combo with a strong character. **Kevin Le Gendre**

A requiem for Ron

Ron Miles
Old Main Chapel

Blue Note 5894818 (CD, DL)

★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Ron Miles (t), Bill Frisell (g) and Brian Blade (d). Rec. 21 September 2011

Ron Miles

It's hard to process that Ron Miles is no longer with us. In our present world of disharmony, his generous soul is much needed. Miles, Blade and Frisell are kindred spirits: each great listeners, each wear their virtuosity lightly, each creates more space than they fill. And it's in those spaces between that the magic distils.

And what magic: 'Mr Kevin' is gentle yet iron-clad strong; this is a righteous conversation, at once as respectful as it is scurrilously witty. This is sit down music, not just because the trio for all different reasons play sat down, but because this is music that demands you sit down with it, sit down and listen, and listen hard, because you'll not want to miss a moment, because it will never be recovered, never repeated.

'There Ain't No Sweet Man Worth the Salt of My Tears' tips its hat to eternity as Miles' horn dreams, and on 'Guest of Honour' Frisell likewise conjures substance from what appears an airy nothingness. And always Blade is there: it's almost shocking when he goes off on one on 'Rudy Go Round'.

Ron Miles is much missed; and his horn and spirit still call to us, call to us. **Andy Robson**

Alicia & Michael Olatuja
Olatuja

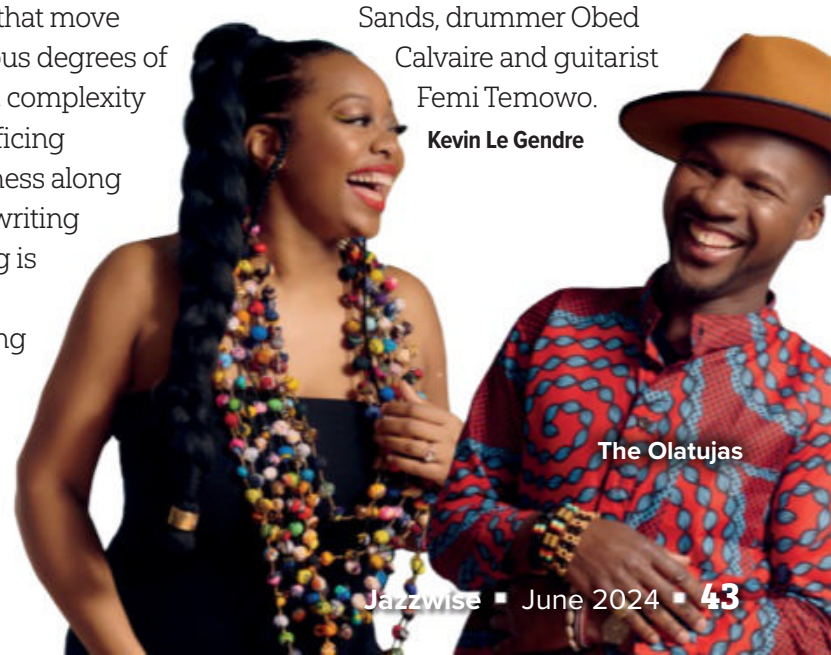
Whirlwind Recordings WR4823 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★

Alicia Olatuja (v), Michael Olatuja (el b), Christian Sands (p, syn), Femi Temowo, David Rosenthal (g), Magatte Sow (perc), Obed Calvaire and Joshua Keitt (d). Rec. 2023

Although vocalist Alicia and bassist Michael Olatuja are accomplished artists in their own right, their collaborations bring out the best in each other. On this enjoyable, often very danceable set they draw liberally on hi-life, afrobeat, soul, funk and jazz to create songs that move through various degrees of polyrhythmic complexity without sacrificing melodic richness along the way. The writing and arranging is consistently strong, peaking on the outstanding 'Bright Side', which sways beautifully in 6/8 to a crisp finger-picked guitar, over which ripples a gorgeous melody and wistful chorus.

Although Alicia and Michael are proven soloists, they exercise effective restraint in order to serve the material as effectively as possible and a piece such as 'Leye's Groove' is the perfect example insofar as the airy backbeat and breathy vocal hook are enhanced by discreet, fleeting improvisations rather than being smothered by them. It's almost a virtual meeting of Erykah Badu and Lionel Loueke.

The Olatujas make for an engagingly creative musical partnership insofar as they are two strong personalities that balance well in an excellent transatlantic band that features pianist Christian Sands, drummer Obed Calvaire and guitarist Femi Temowo. **Kevin Le Gendre**


The Olatujas

Nubiyan Twist
Find Your Flame

Strut STRUT346 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★

Finn Booth (d), Luke Wynter (b), Tom Excell (g), Lewis Moody (ky), Jonny Enser (t), Nick Richards (as), Denis Scully (ts), Hannah Mae (b), Aziza Jaye (v) plus guests. Rec. 2023

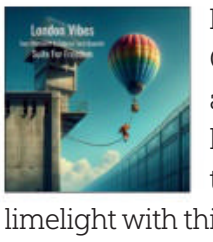
Nile Rodgers is here, and Afrobeat scion Seun Kuti. Accra-born seer KOG brings his highlife stylings; Malian diva Mamani Keita sees us out with her high, husky Bamana-language lyrics. The calibre of such guests is testament to the clout and prestige of nine-piece powerhouse Nubiyan Twist, whose fourth album this is, as it is that of producer/guitarist Tom Excell, who showcases the band's inventiveness, range, and festival-hewn tightness with aplomb.

Whatever the genre - soul or jazz, hip hop or grime - the band maintain their groove and social conscience, as hands-in-the-air joyful as they are cathartic and righteous. Opener 'Battle Isn't Over' is a horn-driven declaration of intent and content fronted by Sheffield-based vocalist Aziza Jaye, a new addition to the team, before we're on to the mighty likes of Rodgers' disco-tastic banger 'Lights Out', Kuti's fiercely contained 'Carry Me' and Glaswegian post-jazz fusionists corto.alto throwing the jazz-kitchen sink into 'You Don't Know Me', through which Jaye's voice soars over a glorious cacophony of honeyed horns and mashed up beats. Not that Nubiyan Twist can't go it alone: the five tracks without guests are as dynamic as the five tracks with features, as solos are passed around, chops are flexed and - as on the title track - the party flame burns brighter than ever. Scorching stuff. **Jane Cornwell**

Tom Ollendorff and Fabrice Tarel Quartet
London Vibes - Suite For Freedom

Tetrakord (CD, DL) ★★★

Tom Ollendorff (g), Fabrice Tarel (p), Christophe Lincontang (b) and Marc Michel (d). Rec. date not stated



Respect for Ollendorff grows across the scene, but it's Tarel who takes the limelight with this suite of his compositions. A graduate of the ever-challenging Leeds College of Music, Tarel's writing has a sense of detail and a sophisticated sense of harmony. And it's all meticulously performed.

Tarel eschews song titles for part numbers, encouraging the sense that this is a classical, chamber-like composition, and to a degree the performances have a 'concert' like feel, a shade constrained, a shade studious. So, 'Part 1' is thoughtful but with a lyrical edge. 'Part 2' lets the corsets off a degree with a jagged riff, while 'Part 3' is a lilting romance with a shimmer of reverb in Ollendorff's seductive guitar. Ollendorff has some of Pete Bernstein's clean toned, Jim Hall vibe, but not quite so swinging, while there are resonances of Metheny in 'Part 4'. There's more urgency in 'Part 6', but control is never lost. Which leaves you wondering whether with a little more risk and abandon there could yet have been more to enjoy.

Andy Robson

One For All
Big George (featuring George Coleman)

Smoke Sessions SSR 2401 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★

George Coleman (ts), Jim Rotondi (t), Eric Alexander (as, ts), Steve Davis (tb), David Hazeltine (kb), John Webber (b) and Joe Farnsworth (d). Rec. 27 September 2022

The One for All collective dates back to 1997, but its music is as fresh today as it was then, as is demonstrated by the opening track here (without special guest George Coleman), 'Chainsaw' by Eric Alexander, which showcases his fluent tenor over a rhythm alternating between funk and swing.

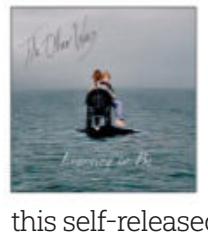
The band has a history of playing a few days' residency (often at New York's Smoke – rather beautifully photographed in the liner notes) and then recording the results. But here virtually all the charts were being played for the first time in the studio. All members of the band shine, and contribute, but the star turn is George Coleman, then 87, whose distinctive hard-toned tenor contrasts with Alexander's.

His occasional whimsical and decorative turns add to the thrust of his solo lines on the blues 'Oscar Winner', but his best performance on the three tracks on which he appears is Hank Mobley's 'This I Dig of You'. Here his mobile lines leap over the neat head arrangement for the other horns. He seems ageless, sounding just as remarkable as when I last heard him in the flesh some twenty years ago, with his use of the instrument's full range, occasional bursts of fluttering alternation between notes, and entirely logical melodic developments. The other soloists all stand out, but it's good to hear the rhythm section – especially bassist Webber – rewarded for their dependability and flexibility with an opening cameo on the final track 'Leemo'. All in all a great collective and an ideal guest fitting seamlessly with the ensemble. **Alyn Shipton**

The Other Way
Learning to Be

Self-release/Bandcamp (CD, DL) ★★★

Rowan Porteous (t, samples), Elly Hopkins (vox,g), Billie Bottle (vox, kb), Guillaume Ottaviani (b) and Emma Holbrook (d). Rec. date not stated



As the band name suggests, there's a contrarian resistance to consistency about this self-released album. The irony starts with opening track 'Guidance', the title belying the misleading and self-contradictory exhortations interjected by singer Elly Hopkins between Rowan Porteous' assertive trumpet breaks over a snapping nu-soul beat. That scarcely prepares you for the laconic, light-touch ballad 'Back To The Centre''s opening field sounds – cattle in a tunnel? – and a generally optimistic mood at odds with the song's vaguely apocalyptic, gnomic lyrics.

The band have aptly described their approach as 'dystopian soul for dancing into the void' and the tunes cherry pick their references from breezy 1960s pop, lounge jazz, jazz-funk and retro-cinematic.

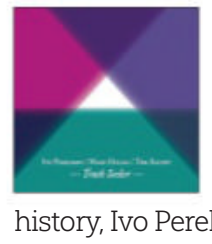
The two consistencies are Porteous' trumpet, a strong and assertive presence throughout, and the precision drumming of Emma Holbrook ensuring that things hold together whatever mood shifts and swerves come her way. Both are exemplified in 'Sit Down', a pessimistic eco-message from the abyss – "time's run out, there's nothing left ... just sit down, it won't be long ..." – the verses' almost jaunty resignation separated by a mix of free-blowing crashouts and smooth jazz interludes. It's probably the most accomplished and original number, followed by a tidy pastiche of 1960s soundtrack instrumentals that is itself dislodged by an anachronistic synth solo.

It's Porteous' project – he wrote music and lyrics – and it's chock full of ideas, perhaps overfull in some of the lengthier tracks: there's a sense of him trying to get everything into a debut recording. But then again, if time's running out that's just what you would do, wouldn't you? **Tony Benjamin**

Ivo Perelman
Truth Seeker

Fundacja Sluchaj (CD, DL) ★★★

Ivo Perelman (ts), Mark Helias (b) and Tom Rainey (d). Rec. date not stated



Like any significant improviser who has grown from the fertile soil of history, Ivo Perelman has notable references. The Brazilian saxophonist has a smoky, vaporous sensuality when he plays a slow descending line that recalls Ike Quebec but when he attacks the upper range of the instrument his tone is piercingly hot and thin, not unlike post-war R&B as well as avant-garde stylists, from Walker to Ayler. All these sonic contrasts are appealing. Most importantly,

the models are used to create a personal style, which is loose and languid in phrasing but has dramatic, urgent pitch bending that gives some of his lines a kind of air raid siren character.

Perelman, bassist Mark Helias and drummer Tom Rainey, both of whom are assertive and responsive players, produce gripping moments of interaction and invention, A case in point is the agitated and agile 'Mystical Vibration', in which the trio injects a folksy slow drag with juddering horn rhythms, languorous arco wails and fizzing sixteenths of cymbal and snare so that the effect is deeply African, like sacred chants set to scrapes of mbira, It compounds the sense of trance that is set to an unsteady rather than steady pulse. Having said that, the coda of 'Life's Meaning', is an irresistible piece of dance music, with its snap 'n' tap rimshots that evoke a crazy samba beat running in reverse, acting as a reminder that the primal, earthiness of carnival traditions is also part of Perelman's birthright. His relentless output, one of the most voluminous in contemporary creative music, shows no sign of compromise or lessening of intensity, and this latest provocative release is a ringing endorsement of his ability to keep finding new territory to explore, which here has an explicitly spiritual dimension.

Kevin Le Gendre

Tineke Postma
Aria

Edition EDN 1217 (CD, LP, DL) ★★★★

Tineke Postma (as, ss), Ben Monder (g), Robert Landfermann (b) and Tristran Renfrow (d).
Rec. April 2022

The initial inspiration for Tineke Postma's eighth own-name release was the expressive singing of singer Maria Callas. Hence the explorations of operatic form, lean arrangements and lyrical melodies that all infuse the set with a sense of space. Counterpoint rhythms, Ben Monder's sparse guitar voicings, and the Dutch saxophonist's airy tone confirm the third-stream slant. Free-flowing improvisation, distortion and discordancy reveal other influences in play.

The set begins with the firm Robert Landfermann bass riff and brittle theme of 'Sankalpa' – the title means 'setting an intention' in Sanskrit; the piece juxtaposes light-touch alto sax with full-on guitar distortion and unfolds over a loose aria form. 'Frede' comes next, a mix of elegiac lyricism and sombre lines, and then 'Sky is Everywhere' and Postma referencing Greg Osby's harmonic probing and twist-and-turn lines.

Elsewhere, bassist Landfermann and drummer Tristran Renfrow interweave a spacious pulse, 'The Lion's Roar' delivers slow-burn distortion and a fusion vibe and there are two lovely ballads built on Monder's backward-facing chords. 'Hymn for Hestia', a peon to the virgin goddess of the hearth, is a carefully constructed juxtaposition of lyricism and discordancy – the piece references the isolation of lockdown rather than a perfect alignment of family and state. 'Loft' is the closer, a moody free-jazz ballad with flutters of sax twinkling over sober bowed bass. **Mike Hobart**

Finn Rees
Dawn is a Melody

Mr Bongo MRB305 (CD, 2 LP, DL)
★★★

Finn Rees (ky), Blakely McLean Davies (g) Cheryl Durongpitikul (ts), Siwei Wong (hp), Audrey Powne (t), Lucky Pereira (d) and Allysha Joy (v).
Rec. 2023

Tasmania, Australia's island state, is a place of clean air, rugged forests, and wind-whipped beaches, where gnarly trees jut from coastal rocks and sunrises are soundtracked by birdsong and wildlife chatter - and here by Tassie-born, Melbourne-based keys player Finn Rees. This fine debut - as ambient and cinematic as it is propulsive and bold - is apparently Rees reflecting on the landscape he grew up in.

A concept album, then, bolstered by full-sounding players on brass, strings, guitar and vocalese, with a musical arc intended to take the listener from beginning (the harp-laden 'Looking Up' conjures the world into being) to middle ('Behind Me Now' is a filmic soul journey) to end ('As It Passes' is increasingly intimate piano-and-strings). Still, with 1970s Yamaha grand piano and vintage mics feeding the warm, analogue aesthetic, with spiritual jazz meanderings redolent of Alice Coltrane and the Hancock-style sonic rainbows being painted by keys, *Dawn Is...* feels more like an accomplished paean to the masters and their tropes than anything new. Nonetheless, it's an effective snapshot of the talent and versatility of the young Melbourne jazz scene, and positions Rees as a bandleader, composer and musician whose profile, like that Tasmanian sun, is guaranteed to rise. **Jane Cornwell**

Julie Sassoon/ Lothar Ohlmeier/ Mia Ohlmeier
Inside Colours Live

Jazzwerkstatt JW244 (2 CD, DL) ★★★★

EDITOR'S CHOICE

Julie Sassoon (p), Lothar Ohlmeier (ts, ss, bcl) and Mia Ohlmeier (d).
Rec. July 2016, March 2022, April 2023

The Manchester-raised, former classical pianist and violinist Julie Sassoon diverted into studies of her own as a 1990s post-grad at Leeds College of Music - taking in Keith Jarrett, Egberto Gismonti, and violin studies with an Indian sitar teacher. Out of all that came the personal mix of linear jazz with Indian structures and Western minimalism that has characterised her music with German saxophonist and life-partner Lothar Ohlmeier (initially in the UK and from 2008 in Berlin), recently enhanced by the presence of their powerful drummer daughter Mia.

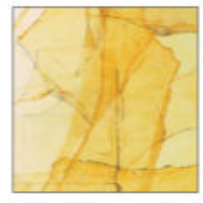
Two-thirds of this live set's tracklist features Sassoon and Lothar Ohlmeier's long-running Inside Colours duo - but when Ulli Blobel heard trio concert recordings, adding Mia's drums, Jazzwerkstatt Records promptly turned the pair's scheduled 2024 duo release into a double album featuring both lineups.

The contrasts between treatments of the same material on *Inside Colours Live* endorses the shrewdness of that decision. Sassoon and Lothar Ohlmeier's patient use of space, and playful pursuance of each other's lines embraced by a tonal centre, are as enticing as always. But the trio's account of 'Shifting' adds a muscular backbeat that seems to spur wilder free-sax passages alongside the original's silvery delicacies. 'To Be' opens with Luthar Ohlmeier' speculative lobs into deep space, until the drums pick up Sassoon's rolling piano groove, driving it toward a percussion finale that brings a storm of applause. 'Land of Shadows' retains its Garbarek-ish calls-into-the-wintry-dark feel, but generates an extra urgency in its conclusion, and the delicately inquisitive bass clarinet feature 'Expectations' winds up in a slamming climactic storm light years from its whispered lyrical beginnings. *Inside Colours Live* feels like the opening of a new chapter in this subtly independent musical family's story. **John Fordham**

Wadada Leo Smith & Amina Claudine Myers
Central Park's Mosaic Of Reservoir, Lakes, Paths And Gardens

Red Hook Records RH1005 (CD, DL)
★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Wadada Leo Smith (t) and Amina Claudine Myers (p). Rec. date not stated



Nature has been a consistent source of inspiration for Wadada Leo Smith throughout a long, illustrious career. This collaboration between the legendary trumpeter and no less legendary pianist-vocalist Amina Claudine Myers, both of whom are pivotal members of Chicago's AACM, takes up the theme once again.

One of New York's premier public spaces, Central Park, is the subject of the music, and the duo captures its tranquility through ballads that often have a heartbreaking tenderness, as well as moments of invention that bring a range of nuance to the colour palette.

Smith's trademarks - the glowering sustains; carefully controlled descents and glinting muted timbres - are particularly effective against an equally vivid but often more economic style from Myers. Her work in the low register of the keyboard, from which she draws warm, gospel-flavoured harks that are particularly effective on 'Central Park At Sunset', is remarkable, but so too is her marvelous touch on the organ, which makes the intensely moving 'Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis Reservoir' a gem at just under two minutes in duration. As for 'Albert Ayler, A Meditation On Light' it captures the deep spiritual charge of the saxophone icon, channeling energy towards a kind of serene wordless psalm. A sumptuous offering from two masters.

Kevin Le Gendre

Jim Snidero
For All We Know

Savant SCD 2215 (CD, DL) ★★★★

Jim Snidero (as), Peter Washington (b) and Joe Farnsworth (d). Rec. 24 October 2023

Vastly experienced and a present-day stalwart on the New York scene, altoist Snidero (born 1958) says it's only now that he feels he has the confidence to handle this 'exposed setting' and cope without chordal support. This after some 25 earlier 'name' albums and an established and enviable reputation as a significant soloist and contributor to top modern bands!

Still, what better way to tackle this pared-down situation than with the expert bass-and-drums team of Washington and Farnsworth, both men first-call players but happily compliant here in the altoist's desire to fully explore his improvisatory potential. Snidero's sound owes something to his early affiliation to his teacher Phil Woods: the vibrato modest, the facility impressive, the control and shading quite perfect, Snidero testing himself on a mix of standards and jazz masterpieces without repetition or hesitancy.

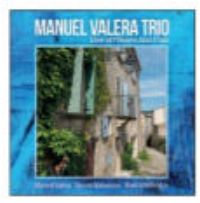
The title track is a lengthy exploration of a fine old tune, Farnsworth and Washington safely tucked in whereas later tracks allow Washington, in particular, to act like a parallel soloist. One might expect 'Parker's Mood' to be fervent and impassioned, instead it is a copybook thesis in the use of nuance, as Snidero investigates its every nook and cranny. This continues on 'Willow Weep', with Washington again masterly and Farnsworth's accompaniment quite minimal. In essence, that is what the album is mostly about: consider it as a masterclass in alto supremacy but in a minimalistic setting. **Peter Vacher**

Manuel Valera Trio
Live at L'Osons Jazz Club

Jammin'ColorS JC-20-002 (CD, DL)

★★★

Manuel Valera (p), Yasushi Nakamura (b) and Mark Whitfield Jr (d). Rec. 12 October 2018



Originally broadcast by French radio in 2018, this album by what was then Manuel Valera's new trio was scheduled to be released in 2020. But the pandemic put paid to that and after a limited release in 2022, it is now appearing in the UK from the Belgian Jammin'ColorS label. The Cuban-born pianist has made a reputation for himself in New York, and works with the highest echelons of musicians there.

This album mixes a handful of standards with Valera's own compositions, and sadly the standards don't come off too well. Jimmy Van Heusen's 'Darn That Dream' loses much of its innate beauty, which has made it such a powerful and popular piece during its 85-year life. Monk's 'Evidence' is given such an angular, spiky treatment that it is barely recognisable, and I doubt Fred Astaire would immediately spot the theme of Cole Porter's 'All of You' which he inaugurated in 1954.

More successful by far is the affectionate treatment of fellow-Cuban composer Osvaldo Farres' 'Tres Palabras', maybe better known to Anglophone listeners as 'Without You' from Disney's 1943 film *Music Maestro*. But where Valera really scores with this collection is in his own music.

As any trio would on a live broadcast, the band dips into his back catalogue and the opening version of 'Mercury' from his *Planets* album (which had just been issued at the time of recording) is a fine and absorbing piece, as is the dramatic and contrasting 'Neptune' from the same project, ushered in by Whitfield to great acclaim from the audience, and then developing brilliantly with fine interplay between the three musicians. The remaining originals on this half of the album are hugely rewarding and repay repeated listening.

Alyn Shipton

Jack Walrath
Live At Smalls

Cellar Live 628308830022 (CD, DL)

★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Jack Walrath (t), Abraham Burton (ts), George Burton (p), Boris Koslov (b) and Donald Edwards (d). Rec. date not stated

Jack Walrath has been living and playing jazz in NYC since 1970, working with a host of luminaries, not least Charles Mingus. Over the course of more than 30 albums as a leader he's carved out a formidable reputation as performer and composer, working in exactly the kind of tough swinging post-bop that has its spiritual home in Spike Wilner's legendary Smalls club.

This recording captures him on front of an eminently *simpatico* line-up, running through some of his extensive back catalogue of compositions with panache and gusto and a decent helping of hip, sardonic NYC front. Abraham Burton is a fine Henderson-esque tenor man who is the perfect foil for Walrath's full-voiced, nimble trumpet, and the rhythm section definitely know how to cook.

'A Bite In Tunisia' sounds like a mordant updating of the immortal Horace Silver Quintet of the mid-1960s: 'Grandpa Moses' and 'Roadkill' would fit neatly on a Mingus record, with their boppish vocabulary rooted in an awareness of older forms while simultaneously exuding an unmistakeable NY hipness.

George Burton contributes some memorable Pullen-style piano to 'Left Turn At 86th Street' that fits in references to all kinds of stylistic devices from the history of the music while never seeming tricksy. This is the real deal.

Eddie Myer

Andrew Woodhead (plus George Crowley)
Swing You Sinners

Self-release/Bandcamp (CD, DL) ★★★

Andrew Woodhead (p), George Crowley (ts), Sam Wooster (t), Nick Jurd (b) and Jeff Williams (d). Rec. January 2023

Strictly Smokin' Big Band
Strictly Smokin' & Friends

Jazz Sounds Records JSR0019 (CD, DL) ★★★★

Michael Lamb (t, arr, MD), Dick Stacey, Dave Hignett, Pete Tanton, Gordon Marshall (t) Kieran Parnaby, Mark Ferris, Chris Kurji-Smith, John Flood, Chris Gray (tb), Steve Summers, Keith Robinson (as, f), Jamie Toms (ts, cl), Dave Kerridge (ts, fl), Sue Ferris (bs, bcl), Graham Don (p), Pawel Jedrzejewski (g), Michael Whent (b), Guy Swinton (d). Guests: Mike Lovatt (t), Bruce Adams (cnt), Mark Nightingale (tb), Alan Barnes (as), Paul Booth (ss), Gareth Lockrane (f), Ross Stanley (org), Polly Gibbons and Anthony Strong (v). Rec. 31 October 2021

North-East based trumpeter Lamb founded the Strictly Smokin' Big Band in 2004 (see story in *Jazzwise* 295) and has kept it going ever since. Now comes this new release, the third in a series of crowd-funded albums and what a corker it is. None of the tracks recreate any kind of past glory: Lamb likes to emphasise 'the element of surprise' as the band (and their stellar guests) tackle a set of standards (and one original), each cleverly re-imagined.

The opening 'Softly As In A Morning Sunrise' sets the pace, as the trumpet collective shouts out the theme, partly a cappella, three of them including Lamb soloing brightly, with Lovat's high-note finish the bravura touch. Stanley eases into 'Cool Struttin', the horns with him, the writing cushioning his chunky sounds, Toms clear-toned in his solo. Great to hear Stanley in this setting. Following a soulful reading of 'Love For Sale' by Gibbons, it's Nightingale at his ribald best on 'Sweet and Lovely', assertive and blisteringly inventive throughout, the band on song behind him.

Adams has the very mellow 'Pete Kelly's Blues' to himself: his cornet control and poise a delight to hear, as he ebbs and flows, tone, and attack just right. Strong is Sinatra-ish on an engaging 'Devil May Care' before Lockrane is heard on flute (not cornet as billed!) on George Duke's funky 'Daisy Mae' and Alan Barnes sweeps all before him on 'Airegin' ahead of Booth's spirited soprano on his own groove-built 'Twitterbug Waltz'. Compelling writing, tear-away execution, and a bevy of star guests excelling: a shoe-in for my 2024 Top Ten. **Peter Vacher**

Photo: John Lyons

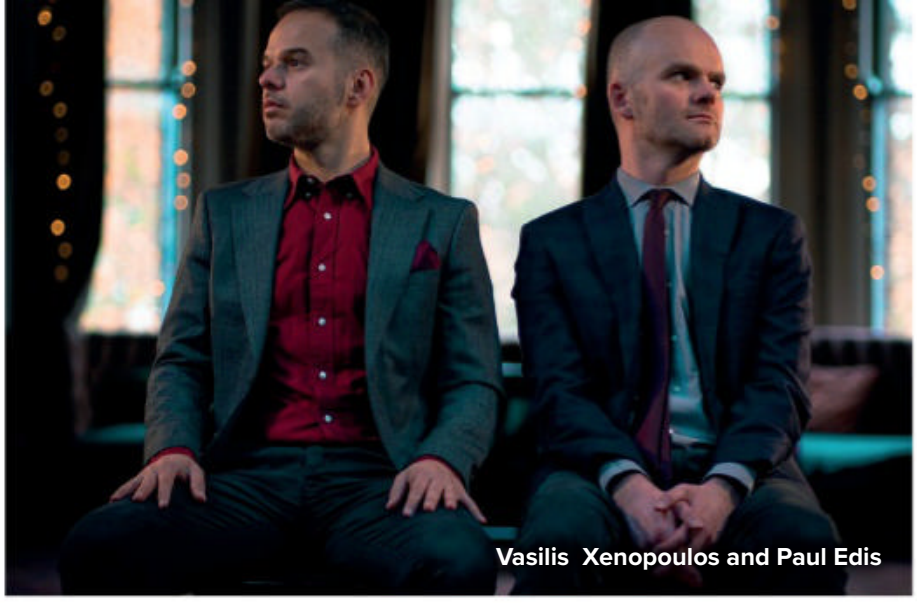


Photo: Goat Noise Photography

Vasilis Xenopoulos and Paul Edis

A largely Birmingham-based quintet, led by the pianist Andrew Woodhead, celebrates the mercurial music that gloriously soundtracked Fleischer Studios' 1930s depression era toons, among the better known being Popeye and Betty Boop, focussing on the sometime featured music of Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Louis Jordan and Cab Calloway.

Recorded live at hip Brummie jazz hang the Spotted Dog, the band explore early-century jazz through a contemporary free jazz collective lens on tracks that include Cab Calloway's 'Minnie the Moocher', 'The Old Man of the Mountain' and Slim Gaillard's 'Flat Foot Floogie'. The quartet have an easy rapport opening tunes up to a modernist sensibility while retaining a raucous contrapuntal collective jazz spirit that faintly echoes earlier Mingus and freer collective storms.

There are some animated contributions all-round from the raw-toned tenor saxophonist George Crowley and trumpeter Sam Wooster, whose turn of phrase and sound captures well something of the early-period without being imitative. Meanwhile the leader-pianist betrays his love of Ellington and Monk with some witty, rhythmically energetic soliloquys.

A sense of relevantly playful abandonment is evident in the ensemble's integration of solos and interplay, and no doubt the audience at the Spotted Dog would have been wagging its collective tail in enthusiastic response.

Selwyn Harris

Vasilis Xenopoulos/Paul Edis Quartet
Feels Like Home

Ubuntu Music UBUO154 (CD, DL)

★★★★ EDITOR'S CHOICE

Vasilis Xenopoulos (ts, ss, f), Paul Edis (p), Adam King (b) and Joel Barford (d). Rec. 13 February 2023

Xenopoulos places himself firmly in the 'straight-ahead' stylistic category and has never concealed his admiration for Dexter Gordon and Hank Mobley, this showing every time he plays. This new group which has been out on the road recently stays broadly with that unfussy mindset and it's a pleasing success. The co-leaders share the compositional responsibilities, with Edis contributing five out of their seven pieces, each evocative of a staging post in their journeys around this island, hence the title and the London Underground-like map on the album's cover.

'The Coast', by Edis, is for his original North-East affiliations, and has a beautifully lucid exposition by the tenorist, with Edis crisp but cleverly expressive in his solo. It's soprano on Edis's 'Lockdown London', the keening sound and quiet feeling recalling the capital city's 'eerie silence' even as Barford breaks up the beat. 'Coming Home' is 'unashamedly romantic' and is quite lovely, underlining Edis' flair for shapely melodic ideas, the ever-alert King's solo an extra adornment, the composer neatly cogent in his solo. Barford opens VX's 'Get Off My Lawn' (don't ask), a swinger with King and the drummer giving the tenorist the kind of vital springboard that he so much likes, Edis in similarly inspired form, the band riff and drum breaks the veritable icing on the thematic cake.

While there's nothing overly turbulent or histrionic here, the quartet's compatibly and their ease in performance is a delight. This epitomised by Vasilis's jaunty flute on 'Mikey's Samba', a tribute to Edis's first car, a Nissan Micra!

Peter Vacher

Shortcuts: CD New Releases

Anthony D'Alessandro
Searchin'

Self-release ★★★

A suave and likeable debut set from Canadian pianist D'Alessandro, whose compositions and playing are melodic, upbeat and hard-swinging. Fellow Canucks Neil Swainson (bass), Ernesto Cervini (drums), Benny Barnack (trumpet) and Caity Gyorgy (vocals) join in the fun. **(KW)**

Audun Automat
Uflaks

AMP Music ★★★

This Norwegian quintet's third album draws parallels between the unpredictable nature of jazz and the odd twists and turns of life. Musically as well as conceptually, it works well, defying expectations and marrying harmony with discord. **(KW)**

Bee Reiki
Bee Raiki

Discus Music ★★★

Violinist/drummer Faradena Afifi and guitarist/electronicist Paul Khimasia Morgan team up with the great pianist Steve Beresford on this set of playful yet edgy improv on which voices, strings, keys and electronics combine to paint a sound picture of unexpected combinations and shifts of direction. Refreshingly unpredictable. **(KW)**

Lori Bell Quartet
Recorda Me - Remembering Joe Henderson

Self-release/Bandcamp ★★★

Part of the new vanguard of imaginative female flautists, including Jamie Baum and Elena Pinderhughes, California-based Lori Bell transposes and reimagines seven key Joe Henderson Blue Note era compositions plus 'Black Narcissus' for alto and C flutes delivered with distinctive depth and invention, and masterful interplay with pianist Josh Nelson. **(JN)**

Edy Forey
Culture Today

So Soul Records ★★★

This new project from Edinburgh-based Edy Forey, aka pianist Guilhem Forey and vocalist Edy Szewy, features stellar cameos from Ezra Collective drummer Femi Koleoso and two Snarky Puppies (Michael League and Bob Reynolds), yet it's the duo's dreamy neo-soul sound that dominates. **(MF)**

Eden Har-Gil
Hearts of Palm

XJazz! Music ★★★★

From Israel but now based in New York, drummer-composer Har-Gil's debut features an intriguing two-sax (altoist Caroline Davis and Lo Wood on baritone) and drums front-line, bolstered by the fearsome bass of Dezron Douglas. On this evidence, young Eden's a talent to watch. **(KW)**

Andreas Hourdakis
Report To Keftiu

Jazz By Bolero ★★★

The Swedish guitarist pays homage to Crete. The result's a collection of contemporary jazz melded with intriguing elements such as traditional Cretan wedding music. **(KW)**

I Am Three
In Other Words

Leo Records ★★★

For their third album, the trio of Silke Eberhard (alto, percussion), .Nikolaus Neuser (trumpet) and Christian Marien (drums) summon up the spirit of Charles Mingus and create a punchy, Mingus-ian soundworld; all the more remarkable because there's no bass player on this recording! **(KW)**

Dawda Jobarteh and Stefan Pasborg
Live in Turku

April Records ★★★★

While the harp has undergone something of a renaissance in jazz, the kora is still a little undersung, yet Denmark-based Gambian-born Dawda Jobarteh could change all that. He partners up with Danish drummer Pasborg for an effusive, bristling live set (the kora distorted and wah-wah-ed at times) that contains some genuine thrills, not least a fantastic take on Mingus' 'Better Git It In Your Soul'. **(MF)**

KAZE
Unwritten

Circum/Libra ★★★

After 13 years together, the quartet Kaze (Satoko Fujii, piano; Natsuki Tamura and Christian Pruvost, trumpet; and Peter Orins, percussion), make their first entirely improvised record together. The spontaneous compositions here are by turns cacophonous, haunting, quiet, thunderous, contemplative and strangely appealing. **(KW)**

Klemens Marktl
Xperience

ATS Records ★★★★

Drummer Marktl, with his trio and guest star, saxophonist Tim Armacost, brew up an upbeat, cool selection of strong compositions that's nostalgic in the best possible way – reminiscent of smoky 1960s NYC jazz club nights – as well as forward-looking. **(KW)**

Tobias Meinhart
Sunset Park

Self-release ★★★

NYC-based German saxophonist Meinhart steps back from his more involved contemporary fusion approach for his eighth album but first trio release to explore an elegant Rollins-esque dialogue with bassist Rick Roasto and drummer Jesse Simpson. It's a highly listenable set packed with high-wire playing. **(MF)**

Terton
Outer, Inner, Secret

Tzadik ★★★

In Tibetan Budism, a 'Terton' is one who uncovers hiden texts. Saxophonist Louie Belogonis, bassist Trevor Dunn and drummer Ryan Shaw make up *this* Terton, and on this surprisingly accessible CD they embark on a revealing improv journey. **(KW)**

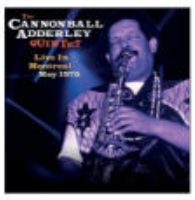
Albums: Reissues/Archive

★★★★★ Landmark Recording ★★★★ Excellent ★★★ Good ★★ Average ★ Disappointing

Cannonball Adderley Quintet
Live in Montreal 1975

Liberation Hall LIB-5132/5199 (CD, LP, DL)) ★★★

Cannonball Adderley (as, ss), Nat Adderley (cnt), Michael Wolff (p, ky), Walter Booker (b) and Roy McCurdy (d, perc). Rec. 3 May 1975



There's been a real flurry of late-period Adderley Quintet 'live' discoveries recently; this Montreal club recording follows hard on our recent reviews of the quintet's earlier concerts in Paris and Bordeaux. Here we're nearly three years on from the Paris date and it's the last-but-one night of the band's six-night engagement at Montreal's Concert Room: two months before Cannonball's debilitating stroke and his subsequent death on 8 August that same year.

The 22-year-old Wolff, lately arrived as the replacement for Hal Galper, is given his say on Ron Carter's 'First Trip', his solo a compendium of possibilities, after the quintet's opening and frenzied 'Five of A Kind', taken at 'breakneck speed' and incorporating a crowd-pleasing and lengthy solo from McCurdy. The usually irresistible 'Mercy, Mercy, Mercy' follows, Wolff's keyboard and Cannonball's soprano off-mike, with McCurdy overly intrusive to my taste.

Cannonball introduces Wolff's Eastern-sounding 'Waban', at some length, his comments arguably more engaging than the music. Booker is heard first, solo, playing arco, Wolff and Booker then giving their ethereal take on this mildly exotic piece, the horns and drums not required. Cannonball offers some 'whimsically hip sermonising', as he introduces 'Country Preacher' riffing genially on all that such a person might consider sinful, the playing quite short and not especially fruitful.

Enjoyable enough, but a far from crucial purchase, given the paucity of playing from the horns and the quality of the Elemental albums already cited. **Peter Vacher**

Ron Carter
Where?

Prestige New Jazz/Original Jazz Classics/ Craft Recordings CR00718 (LP, DL)

★★★★ RECOMMENDED

Ron Carter (b, clo), Eric Dolphy (bcl, as, f), Mal Waldron (p), George Duvivier (b) and Charlie Persip (d). Rec. 20 June 1961

Carter has played on at least 2,200 albums. But he's also made a few as leader – including *Where?*, his 1961 debut as a frontman. Now, a lot of critics have been sniffy about this album over the years, either condemning it as tepid, or too 'poppy'. But these dismissals – some of which may be the result of critical gatekeepers expecting something more incendiary from the jaw-dropping line-up that Carter gathered around him – are just unfair.

Where? is a hugely enjoyable album, and maybe that's the problem. Here's Eric Dolphy, and... well, he sounds like he's having fun! Waldron too. This can't be right, these heavyweights aren't allowed to relax and just enjoy themselves, are they?

Ignore the nasayers, this is a great, fun record (and sounds unbelievably good on this Kevin Gray-cut Craft OJC reissue). Opener 'Rally' sets the tone, a glorious forward rush of drums, bass both plucked and bowed, Waldron's fingers dancing across the keys and Dolphy at his most witty and relaxed. The aptly-named 'Bass Duet' (the LP's highlight) follows, a deliciously funky, insistent groove featuring a right battle royal between Carter and Duvivier and elliptical piano from Waldron. Randy Weston's title track has a lovely bowed solo from Carter and on a super-swinging take on Sy Olver's 'Yes Indeed' Dolphy sounds jaunty in a way he'd never be again. So – stuff the naysayers, just sit back and enjoy this delighful jazz treasure.

Kevin Whitlock

Dizzy Gillespie
Soul & Salvation

Liberation Music LIB-5134/5 (CD, LP, DL) ★

Dizzy Gillespie, Joe Newman (t), Garnett Brown, Benny Powell (tb), James Moody, Joe Farrell, Eddie Pazant, Seldon Powell, Jerome Richardson (reeds), Al Williams, Ernie Hayes (ky), Cornell DuPree, Billy Butler, Carl Lynch, Wally Richardson (g), Jimmy Tyrell (el b), Ray Lucas (d), George Devens (perc), anonymous singers (v) and Ed Bland (cond, dir). Rec. 1969

In August 1969 Dizzy Gillespie recorded *Cornucopia*, an album of the popular tunes of the day including 'Windmills of Your Mind' and the Beatles' 'Get Back', arranged and conducted by Don Sebesky, and to some extent rescued by the assertive drumming of Pretty Purdie, holding the whole thing together. His next foray into soul jazz territory was this truly awful album, arranged by Ed Bland, and made a few weeks later, which despite an all-star line-up, manages to be tasteless and uninspiring, and lives up to its arranger's surname, apart from an almost passable opening track 'Stomped and Wasted'.

There are solo vignettes for James Moody here and there, but unlike so many of Dizzy's fine recordings with larger ensembles, this has some ragged section playing, notably in the early part of 'Chicken Giblets'. Even a hint of a chase chorus with Joe Newman can't save it. The whole album suffers (as British critic Barry McRae noted at the time) from being "overlaid with a barrage of guitarists and percussionists, and a female choir".

Given that this was the year Miles recorded *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*, pointing to a future direction for jazz fusion, *Soul & Salvation* suggests Dizzy was trying a move in a similar direction, but at the pop end of the spectrum.

Brian Auger's Oblivion Express
Live Vol. 1

Soul Bank Music SBM026CD/LP (CD, LP, DL) ★★★

Live Vol. 2

Soul Bank Music SBM027LP/CD (CD, 2LP, DL) ★★★★

Brian Auger (org, ky, v), Jack Mills (g), Barry Dean (b), Steve Ferrone (d) and Alex Ligertwood (v). Rec. 1974

Despite the rambunctious energy of Auger's various line ups, live was where it was at for the Hammond man's bands. And never more so than with the Oblivion Express. Well, we say Hammond man – Auger's early heroes were the likes of Lonnie Liston Smith – but these re-issues regally drip with Fender Rhodes piano. Which is no surprise, given that by the early 1970s Auger was in the thrall of Herbie Hancock in his jazz-funk, Headhunters mode. So, revel in an epic take on 'Maiden Voyage' which captures all that makes the Express such fun: unfettered, fiery and crackling with energy. Okay, it's hardly subtle, but Hancock himself remained appreciative of Auger's efforts. Other compulsory faves include a roogalating 'Freedom Jazz Dance', a show-stopping 'Inner City Blues' and the perennial 'Bumpin' on Sunset'. Of course, the vinyl versions only add to that sense of nostalgia where it seemed all forms of music could vitally feed into each other. **Andy Robson**

It is little short of a disaster, and it was a relief to us all when he went on the road the following year with his quintet featuring pianist Mike Longo and bassist Red Mitchell, playing his best-known repertoire from 'Con Alma' to 'Night in Tunisia'. This group's fine 1970 album *Live* on the Blu-Jazz label is a much better marker of how excellent Gillespie still was at this period. **Alyn Shipton**

Lonnie Johnson and Victoria Spivey

Four Classic Albums... Plus

Avid AMSC1444 (2 CD) ★★★

Lonnie Johnson (g, v), Victoria Spivey (p, v), Eddie Lang (as Blind Willie Dunn) (g), Blind John Davis and Porter Grainger (p). Rec. 1926-1962

Despite the double billing, this is actually a collection of four Lonnie Johnson LPs made from 1946-62, one of which teams him with Victoria Spivey, plus the duets that Johnson recorded with Eddie Lang in the 1920s.

It's a shame that some of the dozen or so 78 sides that Spivey and Johnson recorded in 1928 aren't represented here, as they'd make a fascinating contrast to their 1961 *Woman Blues* session which is included.

That said, the two of them make a great blues team, and Spivey's spiky piano playing complements Johnson's more urbane guitar. They're perfectly matched, vocally and instrumentally, on 'Let's Ride Tonight', and the witty 'I Got Men All Over This Town'. The other albums collected here show that in 1962 Johnson's instrumental talent still shone brightly not least on 'Blues After Hours' from the 1962 *Another Night To Cry* LP. By then he was using the electric instrument, but his mastery of the acoustic guitar was still apparent in the tracks collected here from the 78s that made up his *Blues* album from 1946, though it is at its extrovert best in his virtuoso duets with Lang from 1926, notably the celebrated 'Hot Fingers'.

Finally, the *Lonesome Road* album from the 1950s shows just why this fine singer and guitarist inspired the stage name of young Tony Donegan, who heard him in London at the start of that decade. **Alyn Shipton**

Harold Land

The Fox

Contemporary/Craft Recordings CR00708 (LP, DL) ★★★★ RECOMMENDED

Harold Land (ts), Dupree Bolton (t), Elmo Hope (p), Herbie Lewis (b) and Frank Butler (d). Rec. August 1959

A classic of what West Coast jazz authority Robert Gordon once dubbed 'California Hard', *The Fox* is a record with quite a history. Indeed, when originally issued by the tiny Hifijazz label in 1960 its combination of blink-and-you'll-miss-it shelf life and definitive stylistic performances soon turned it into something of an underground cult item.

In addition to this, it contained some of the few recorded examples of a figure as mercurial as the animal celebrated in the album's title (although its dedicatee was actually Land himself); trumpeter Dupree Bolton, one of hard bop's great 'what-if's?' who after a life wrecked by all sorts of nefarious vices surfaced again two decades later, confounding all those who believed rumours of his early death.

But that's not the real story here. Rescued from discographical limbo and reissued in 1969 by Contemporary (and here in a stunning vinyl facsimile), this is a record that effectively bridges the two artistic phases of its leader, the gauzy-toned tenor who'd established himself as one of the Los Angeles scene's top boppers with his famed stint in the Max Roach/Clifford Brown quintet a few years earlier, but whose ears had latterly been opened wide by John Coltrane's work.

A few years' hence Land's characterful, always personal, style was to be almost completely buried beneath the Traneisms, but here he brokers the ground between his new and old selves with total success. In fact, this is an album of considerable subtlety beneath its apparent veneer of Hollywood hard bop. While the furious title track recalls the Brown/Roach axis, elsewhere things are far from conventional. Quirky New York migrant Elmo Hope's writing is the key – he penned four of the six tracks – his themes often striking a disquieting note (try 'Mirror-Mind Rose'), steering the archetypal tenor and trumpet into the darker waters soon to be explored by the likes of Andrew Hill and Jaki Byard.

And while Land gives the performance of his life, it's hard not to focus on the enigmatic Bolton, whose control of his instrument on the title track is nothing short of breathtaking, supporting the folklore of his being the true heir to Clifford Brown.

Beautifully recorded in that sunny sound that somehow all those LA studios managed to specialise in back in the 1950s, every note rings out with a clarity that makes this a very up close and personal record. So a stunner then, in every sense. If your tastes are for Silver, the Messengers and Miles and you think anything recorded west of Chicago back in the day was a bloodless exercise, hear this and think again.

"The session has always loomed large in my mind as an important event" Land is quoted as saying on the sleeve. It's much more than that though; it's a record which has stood every test and which sounds, 65 years later, as fresh as paint. **Simon Spillett**

Harold Land

Charlie Lavere & his Chicago Loopers

His 25 finest 1933-1951

Retrospective RTR 4416 (CD) ★★★

Collective personnel: Charlie Lavere (p), Charlie Teagarden, Claude Whiteman, Marty Marsala, Johnny Mendell, Jabbo Smith, Billy May, Chuck Mackey , Rico Vallese (t), Jack Teagarden, Tom Moore, Preston Jackson, Floyd O'Brien, Joe Yukl (tb), Matty Matlock (cl), Joe Marsala (cl, ts), Boyce Brown (as), Bud Taylor, Joe Masek, Jack Chaney (ts), Rod Cless, Buddy Fisk, Dale Skinner, Bud Freeman (reeds), Joe Rushton (bass sax), Jess Stacy (p), Joe Venuti (vln), Dick McPartland, Joe Young, George Van Eps (g), Eddie Gilbert, Leonard Bibbs, Israel Crosby , Artie Shapiro, Country Washburne (b), Bob Conselman, Zutty Singleton, Nick Fatool (d). Louis Armstrong with Gordon Jenkins: Louis Armstrong (t,v), Charles Gifford, George Thow, Bruce Hudson (t), Eddie Miller, Dent Eckels (ts), Charlie Lavere (p), Allan Reuss (g), Phil Stephens (b), Fatool (d) plus strings. Rec. 29 July 1933; 11 March 1935; 5 April 1935; 22 July 1944; 1 November 1944; 24 February 1945; 27 February 1947; 21 February 1950; 28 November 1951

Lavere (1910-1983) was a busy man-about-music, an able Waller-influenced stride and boogie pianist, bandleader, composer and singer whose well-regarded small group sessions mostly badged as his Chicagoans or Chicago Loopers are assembled together for the first time.

Otherwise, he was employed in the studios, often with Gordon Jenkins or as accompanist to Bing Crosby and others. Two of his recordings with Jenkins are also here, one forgettable, the other from an Armstrong/Jenkins session which features Lavere trading phrases memorably with the on-form Louis himself.

Teagarden's opening pair tracks are from 1933 and feature the leader and brother Charlie, plus Lavere and Freeman in pleasingly swinging form, the tidy arrangements by the young David Rose. Lavere's Chicagoans are from 1935 and were recorded in the Windy City, and highlight hot moments from the brothers Marsala and pianist Stacy, the latter on 'Smiles,' the only non-Lavere composition out of five. Jabbo misses out (he failed to show for the follow-up session) and Zutty has fun.

Thereafter Ray Crick's selection jumps forward to 1944/1945 with four sessions by Lavere's Chicago Loopers, now transplanted to Los Angeles, and made for the local Jump label, these cast in Crosby Bob-Cats style, with ex-Crosby clarinettist Matlock the star turn throughout and Fatool, as ever, dynamic at the drums. Their final session is the best, with Jack T in peerless form and the little-known Vallese lyrical and calm.

Engaging certainly, but not essential perhaps. **Peter Vacher**

Manne up!

Shelly Manne & His Men
Live at the Blackhawk Vol. 1

Contemporary/Craft Recordings CR00601 (LP, DL)

★★★★ RECOMMENDED

Shelly Manne (d), Joe Gordon (t), Richie Kamunca (ts), Victor Feldman (p) and Monty Budwig (b). Rec. 24 and 29 September 1959

Excellent jazz from the ongoing Contemporary/Craft reissue series, here highlighting one of the leading figures of West Coast jazz, drummer Shelly Manne, with a trumpet/tenor saxophone lineup more associated with the East Coast of the period. The difference here is the laid-back, comfortably in-the- pocket jazz touch of five men on the bandstand playing as much for themselves as the Blackhawk audience. Contemporary originally released four volumes taken from Manne's September live date (subsequently released on CD by American Jazz Classics as a box set) claiming it was the entirety of the material recorded, but in 1991 Fantasy/ Contemporary came up with six previously unissued tracks, released as *Volume 5* of the Blackhawk set.

Back in 1959, such was the quality of this music, Lester Koenig rush-released all four volumes within months of each other – and during the lifetime of this band. The Joe Gordon and Richie Kamuca frontline will be unfamiliar to many more versed in Blue Note/Prestige jazz of the period, but anonymity has never been an impediment to creativity, and throughout their essentially melodically-based (rather than pattern-based) improvisations and beguiling (dictionary definition: enchanting in a deceptive way) lines hook the listener. Then there is the talent of Londoner Victor Feldman, then making his way on the West Coast after debuting on Contemporary in a trio with Scott LaFaro and Stan Levey.

Photo: Ray Acery/CTS Images

Feldman's talent was too big for London, his playing in the USA even had Miles Davis record with him and offered him the piano chair in his band, and here matches the mood of the moment sublimely. **Stuart Nicholson**

Shelly Manne & His Men
Jazz From the Pacific Northwest

Reel to Real RTR012 (2 CD, 2 LP) ★★★

Shelly Manne (d), Monty Budwig (b), Russ Freeman, Hampton Hawes (p), Herb Geller or Frank Strozier (as), Stu Williamson, Conte Candoli (t) and Ruth Price (v) on 'Dearly Beloved' and 'Surrey With the Fringe on Top' only. Rec. 4 October 1958 and 7, 15 September 1966

It's to be welcomed that the West Coast jazz scene in the 1940s, through the 50s and into the 60s, is slowly being rediscovered by the musically curious and vinyl collectors: now is the time to invest in good, clean original Contemporary releases of the period.

Manne was a key figure during those years, albeit almost forgotten today. This two CD and LP set, recorded at the Monterey Jazz Festival (disc one) in 1958, and at The Penthouse in Seattle, Washington in 1966 (disc two), offers Manne's basic working group of the period, an alto/trumpet front line plus rhythm first unveiled on the classic albums *Swinging Sounds* (January 1956) and *More Swinging Sounds* (August 1956).

For these Reel to Real live dates, there are comings and goings among the quintet personnel; but the integrity of the music remains intact as Manne is able to call on top notch replacements. The Penthouse sessions benefit from a better sound, albeit the two Ruth Price (a competent night club singer) vocals are of little interest today. At Monterey, the quintet performed Bill Holman's 'Quartet (A Suite in Four Movements)', previously released on *More Swinging Sounds*, and that is convincingly performed here live. Monterey is an outdoor festival, so the recorded sound is average and picks up three propellor-driven planes that fly over at different points; this reminds us of the immediacy of the event, but ultimately the music wins out. **Stuart Nicholson**

Albert Nicholas/ Edmond Hall/ George Lewis
Great Jazz Great Clarinets 1953-1957

Upbeat URCD335 (CD) ★★★★

Albert Nicholas, Edmond Hall, George Lewis (cl), unknown personnel (André Réwéliotty Orchestra), PT Stanton (cnt), Ralph Sutton (p), Dick Oxtot (bjo), Walter Page, Louis Sharpton (b), Charlie Lodice (d) and Barbara Dane (v).
Rec. 1953, July 1954, 1956, 1957

Here's another of Upbeat's ready-made compilations from their takeover of the Jazz Crusade label, where it first appeared as *Rare Cuts – Great Clarinets*, a follow-up to *Great Trumpets* reviewed in our March 2023 issue.

These three clarinettists may well have shared Crescent City affiliations but their instrumental mastery was sufficiently individual to offer both variety and value in this engaging compilation.

Nicholas is first up with Réwéliotty's zesty if unidentified Parisian traditionalists as recorded by Vogue, the serviceable arrangements allowing him plenty of room to offer his filigree and undeniably hot variations. If the repertoire is familiar, Nicholas vocalising in Creole fashion on his 'Moi Pas L'Aime Ca' is less so. Throughout a long career, Nicholas never disappointed.

As for Hall, these air-checks with Sutton's quartet are culled from successive 1954 stints at the Hangover in San Francisco and put simply, they're terrific. The two men perform as equals, the clarinettist throaty and hard-driving, Sutton the ever-swinging stride master, each matching the other for joyous intensity, their interplay on 'Blues My Naughty Gives to Me' a delight to behold. Sutton is exhilarating on 'I've Found A New Baby', Hall equally so.

Lewis' six tracks are from two of quartet leader Oxtot's San Francisco engagements, the distinguished New Orleanian guesting alongside similarly-minded purist types and moving irresistibly through these less-than-familiar pieces. The 'simple flowing quality' of his playing shines out, his tone 'exquisite', the ideas constant, Stanton a capable second voice. Dane does her heartfelt Bessie Smith bit on 'The Glory of Love' and a blues too. Note Oxtot is listed on the sleeve as a trombonist. Not so. **Peter Vacher**

Oregon
Treffpunkt Jazz Ludwigsburg 1990

SWR Jazz Haus JAH 485 (2 CD) ★★★★

Ralph Towner (g, p, yb), Paul McCandless (f, ss, ob, cl), Glen Moore (b, el b) and Trilok Gurtu (perc). Rec. 27 November 1990

This is the second iteration of Oregon, formed three years after the death of founder-member Collin Wallcott in 1984. Gurtu's precise, invigorating percussion fits perfectly with the quicksilver guitar of Towner and the mobile basslines of Moore. On the opening 14-minute track, Towner's 'June Bug', their collective empathy is immediately apparent, and Gurtu's extended solo completely fits the band's aesthetic and gets riotous applause.

Recorded by Germany's South West Radio, this is one of the treasures to have been brought out of the past broadcast archive for international issue. The band often drew on its old collaborations, and here its earlier work with Jim Pepper is recalled with 'Witchi-Tai-To' in a version that nods slightly in Pepper's direction, but is very much about where the band was at in 1990, with Towner's emphatic but also beautifully delicate guitar taking the lead, and ushering a fine solo from Moore, before McCandless shines on soprano sax.

With 14 tracks spread over two CDs, many of them clocking in at around or above the 10-minute mark, there's a feast of listening here, but the momentum never flags, and it's often hard to remember that this is just a quartet, the sound is so full and the interaction so complete. Whether taking off on a free improvisation over a guitar motif ('Waterwheel'), building on Towner's self-duetting on piano and electric piano ('Hand in Hand'), or building a spooky atmosphere with McCandless' horns and Towner's pitch-varied keyboard over Moore's bass on 'Leather Cats', this sounds like no other group in jazz. For a fine set by this incarnation of Oregon, look no further. **Alyn Shipton**

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Paco de Lucia and Pepito de Lucia

Pepe y Paquito

BMG 4099964036701 (CD, 2 LP, DL)

★★★★ RECOMMENDED

Paco de Lucia (g) and Pepito de Lucia (v). Rec. 1959-60

This some find. Originally recorded on a vintage Grundig TK36 tape recorder in the years 1959 and 1960, unearthed from the vaults of the estate of the iconic flamenco guitarist Paco de Lucia (1947 - 2014), these 21 songs are both mesmerising curiosities and testament to talent both god-given and obsessively nurtured.

Way before Paco de Lucia took the flamenco world by storm, then ventured into classical music and jazz-fusion; decades before he'd become Spain's greatest musical export, he was one of four brothers apprenticed in an artform developed in the *gitano* subculture of the region of Andalusia. He and his singer brother Pepe, who later became a mainstay of Paco's sextet, were coached by their *paterfamilias*, Antonio Sanchez, a strict taskmaster whose standards, almost impossibly high, were – on the strength of this discovery – at the very least striven for.

Respectively aged 13 and 11, Paco and Pepe laid down this mix of palos/categories (*bulerias, fandangos, rumbas*) before their first official material as a duo called Los Chiquitos de Algeciras in 1961. Behind Pepe's anguished pre-teen vocalising is Paco's already remarkable mastery of guitar techniques ('Zapateado Niño Ricardo' and ' Soleá Niño Ricardo' is just him, soloing). While the life experience that would infuse Paco's *oeuvre* (and Pepe's voice) with emotion and colour is to come, there's a preternatural vibe, an otherworldly authenticity, to these siblings that make *Pepe y Paquito* worth a deep dive.

Jane Cornwell

Brother Jack McDuff

Ain't No Sunshine: Live in Seattle

Reel to Real RTR011 (2CD, 2 LP) ★★

Jack McDuff (org), Lee Johnson, Dave Young (ts, ss, cl), Vinne Corrae (g), Ron Davis (d), plus uncredited (t). Rec. 13 September 1972

This spectacularly so-so excursion into public domain blues riffs by Brother Jack McDuff is certainly not up to the standard of his classic Prestige albums of the preceding decade with the likes of Jimmy Forrest, Grant Green, Gene Ammons, Red Holloway and George Benson.

The 10-minute opener features the organist, whose manipulation of his organ stops ends up producing a sound more like a castrated clavinet than a mighty Hammond B-3.

On 'Three Blind Mice', McDuff's choice of stop settings is again questionable, as he squawks his way through an extended "bluesy" solo before turning to the Jimmy Smith cliche of a sustained tonic chord using on the top keyboard, while working up a 'funky' counter line on the lower, bass keyboard. His backing band are of a semi-pro competent hotel band standard: functional, but no no more and simply add to the feeling that this particular tape discovery of previously unreleased tracks maybe should have remained at the bottom of the box. Despite the extended liner note encomium extolling McDuff's reputation, there is little joy to be found here. **Stuart Nicholson**

Paco and Pepito de Lucia

Thelonious Monk

Criss-Cross

Columbia/Pure Pleasure PPAN CS8838 (LP) ★★★★★

Thelonious Monk (p), Charlie Rouse (ts), John Ore (b) and Frankie Dunlop (d). Rec. 6 November 1962 – 29 March 1963

This LP was Thelonious Monk's second album for Columbia Records after *Monk's Dream*; much of it was recorded at the sessions which produced that album and Monk and his producer Teo Macero may have been holding their best stuff back, because it's even better than *Dream*. The quartet of Monk, Rouse, Ore and Dunlop had been playing together almost five years by this point, and here they're in perfect lockstep, brimming with confidence, whether tackling pop standards or re-shaping the leader's own, singular compositions.

Thus, 'Hackensack' - a typically frenetic Monk original - opens proceedings by demonstrating the bandleader's strength in a quartet environment. The solid rhythmic support of the trio seems to unfetter Monk, who's given the confidence to experiment wildly, unleashing torrents of percussive inflections and intoxicating chord progressions. The title track, which subsequently became a Monk standard (and which was chosen as the 'Castaway's Favourite' by legendary writer/photographer, and regular *Jazzwise* contributor Val Wilmer when she appeared on the BBC's *Desert Island Discs* earlier this year) also reflects the ability of the backing musicians to keep up with the pianist's jaw-dropping imaginative flourishes and rhythmic/harmonic diversions. The more straightforward 'Tea for Two' showcases Monk's appreciation for the stride piano style of James P Johnson and Willie 'The Lion' Smith, but of course the tune is given a delightfuly elliptical twist. Also demonstrating Monk's love of, and debt to, the stride pianists of an earlier era is 'Don't Blame Me' with its dazzling extended runs up and down the keyboard.

Little more needs to be said about this classic recording, other than if you don't have it in your collection, you need to acquire a copy pronto. And this great-sounding analogue LP – mastered by Ray Staff at AIR Studios – is your ideal opportunity to do so.

Kevin Whitlock

Sun Ra & His Solar-Myth Arkestra

The Solar-Myth Approach

BYG Actuel 529.202 (2 CD, 2 LP, DL)

★★★★ RECOMMENDED

Sun Ra (p, syn, clavinet, space-master), Kwame Hadi (t), Ahk Tal Ebah (t, space dimension mellophone), Ali Hassan, Charles Stevens (tb), Marshall Allen (as, ob, f, picc), John Gilmore (ts, perc), Danny Ray Thompson, Pat Patrick (bs, f), James Jacson (ob, f, Ancient Egyptian infinity drum), Ronnie Boykins (b), Clifford Jarvis, Lex Humphries (perc), Nimrod Hunt (hand drum), June Tyson and Art Jenkins (v). Rec. 1970-71

Sun worshippers are having a great time of it of late: following last month's triple helping of previously unissued Ra, comes this lavishly-packaged and very welcome re-release of some classic early 1970s sounds. As is so often the case with Mr Ra however, the origins of what we're actually listening to are a little hazy, as *Jazzwise*'s Kevin Le Gendre points out in his excellent sleeve notes (for example – did some of these recordings actually originate back in the 1960s, and are the lineup details accurate?).

No matter, whatever its origin, this is stellar(!) music, and these two albums, originally released separately and reissued many times in versions of varying quality, are now fully restored and presented in a gorgeous double CD or LP package; they were important in bringing the magic of Ra to a wider international audience and also featured extensive use of the then new-fangled synthesizer, bringing new tones and textures to an already vast sonic palette.

What we have here is a kind of wild, teetering-on-the-edge-of-chaos musical mosaic, a statement of intent, rather than a record of a particular time or event; and as such it makes for an ideal introduction to, and text for the understanding of, the otherworldy universe of the man born Herman Blount 110 years ago.

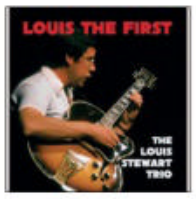
What's striking about listening to *The Solar-Myth Approach* is just how ahead of his time Sun Ra was, both musically and politically – his 'Afro-futurist' approach – envinced by epics such as 'In The Realm of Lighning', 'The Utter Nots' and 'Legend' (all innovative, ripe with energy and possibility) – was bold, even in an era when the black consciousness movement was gaining traction. But it's also *out*

of time – as Le Gendre says in his liner note, "the music bundled on these discs has achieved the enviable feat of transcending whatever era in which it was laid to tape." Essential for newbies and committed collectors. **Kevin Whitlock**

The Louis Stewart Trio
Louis The First

Livia Records LRCD2401 (CD) ★★★★

Louis Stewart (g), Martin Walshe (b) and John Wadham (d). Rec. September 1975



Local-boy-made-good, and Ireland's most high-status jazz musician, Louis Stewart (1944-2016) worked first in Dublin showbands, and then built a jazz career that brought him associations with the greatest players of the day. By the time of this, his first 'name' recording, he had already worked and recorded with Tubby Hayes and toured Europe three times with Benny Goodman. He then went on to perform with Ronnie Scott and George Shearing, recording often, and occasionally nipping back to Dublin to re-engage with old friends, including his co-workers on this exceptional album.

The revived Livia Records label having now embarked on its reissue, the original notes reproduced, the original tapes newly digitised, the commentary remarks that the album 'was a triumph' and rightly so.

Stewart launches into 'All The Things You Are' as if life itself depended on it, his sure-footed variations, sonic clarity and plectrum technique quite stunning, suggesting that those earlier stellar employers knew that they were on to a good thing in engaging him. This is guitar mastery of a high order, the inspiration unceasing, as on 'Here's That Rainy Day' played solo, the eloquent melodic statements complemented by a kind of bravura self-accompaniment. 'Bluesology' is taken slow, Walshe's superb walking bass lines and Wadham's crisp brushes firmly in the pocket, as they say, the guitar quite spare at first, the timing just right. There's a fetching Jobim piece as well as Shorter's 'Footprints' also to commend.

There's more than enough here to justify Stewart's place in the guitar pantheon. He was the real deal, for sure. **Peter Vacher**

The 3 Sounds plus Lou Donaldson
Four Classic Albums

Avid Jazz AMSC1448 (2 CD) ★★★★

Lou Donaldson (as), Gene Harris (p), Andrew Simpkins (b) and Bill Dowdy (d). Rec. 16 and 28 September 1958, 18 February 1959, 28 June 1960

Formed in 1957 by drummer Dowdy, the Three Sounds enjoyed a decade or so of success, their highly stylised 'blues-infused groove', tempered with the occasional hint of bebop, proving popular in both supper clubs and on record.

Avid have selected four from their various Blue Note albums, the February 1959 date with Donaldson, the others including a pair that emanated from a single session in September 1958. In the end, the trio members went their separate ways, Simpkins to George Shearing's group, Dowdy into jazz education, Harris taking the jazz-rock route before emerging as a spirited touring soloist.

It's tempting to see the Sounds' music as a watered-down version of the real thing, but Harris in particular could always find a bluesy phrase or a swinging lick to entertain. Gradually their repertoire expanded to include more standards and show tune, 'Love For Sale', for example, opening with a bass solo and tapping drum motif but never straying far from the melody, Harris chordal and repetitive in enticing fashion. Call it lightweight jazz, reminiscent of some early Ahmad Jamal routines, yet it's undeniably engaging. As is their version of Basie's immortal 'L'il Darlin'', Harris rolling the tremolos.

Donaldson brings added fire and energy to their joint performances, the album originally entitled *LD+3*, flying Bird-like on a series of familiar pieces, his presence transformative, the trio galvanised, Dowdy and Simpkins pushing hard, and Harris unfurling his jazz capabilities in full. Three stars just about, but add one more for Donaldson. **Peter Vacher**

Cal Tjader
Huracán

Liberation Music LIB 5113 (CD, LP, DL)

★★★★ RECOMMENDED

Cal Tjader (vb), Alex Rodriguez, Ronald King (t), Frank Rosolino (tb), Gary Foster, Kurt McGettrick (reeds), Clare Fischer (p, ky), Rick Zunigar (g), Robb Fisher (b), Victor Pantoja, Poncho Sanchez and Willie Bobo (perc). Rec. March 1978

After spells with Dave Brubeck and George Shearing, vibraphonist, occasional drummer and bandleader Cal Tjader devoted himself to Latin and Afro-Cuban music. Percussion was never far from his mind, and the excellent rhythm section here, built around his long-term colleague Willie Bobo delivers excitement and propulsion to what is in effect a mini-big-band.

The section writing is by Clare Fischer, displaying his usual neat touch. The up-tempo opener 'Ritmo Caliente' draws us in, with its infectious pulse and some fine soloing from both Tjader and the sparkling trumpet of Alex Rodriguez , a Woody Herman and Gerald Wilson veteran. Gary Foster's subtle flute brings in the band for the gentler 'Desposado', and the equally relaxed 'Tres Palabras' has some fine ensemble playing and a characteristic Fischer technique, which is to have Tjader solo over a well-written harmonised countermelody. The effect draws the listener in, and this is helped by the first-rate sound quality, achieved not by close-miking, but by four overhead mics, giving the aural impression of the band playing live.

The title track is, as the title suggests, a storming performance, with some natty brass section playing and driving percussion, plus first-rate solos from McGettrick (on baritone), Rosolino (in the last year of his tragic life) and the leader. All the signs are here of the formula that would win Tjader a Grammy in 1979 for *La Onda Va Bien*.

Alyn Shipton

Spanish steps
Various Artists
Echoes Of Spain

él/Cherry Red ACME3CD371 (3 CD) ★★★★ RECOMMENDED

Artists include: Miles Davis, Gil Evans, John Coltrane, Django Reinhardt, Maurice Ravel, Claude Debussy, Manuel De Falla, Joaquín Rodrigo, Issac Albéniz, Manuel Ponce, Federico Torroba, Sabicas, Léo Delibes, Enrique Granados, Andrés Segovia and others. Rec. 1939–62

The subtitle – *From Segovia and Sabicas to Miles Davis and John Coltrane* – explains the thinking behind this good-value boxette rather nicely. Virtually every reader will have the landmark Miles Davis/Gil Evans collaborations in their collection. All of *Sketches of Spain* and chunks of *Miles Ahead* (plus 'Flamenco Sketches' from *Kind of Blue*) are included here; little more needs to be said about those, other than that these recordings bought the colours of orchestral music (not just Spanish) to jazz in a way that hadn't been heard before, outside of Ellington. What's more interesting is the way in which the set contextualises Evans' innovations. So, as well as other jazzers who delved into Spanish textures (Trane, Django), we get the classical French (Ravel, Debussy) and Iberian masters (Rodrigo, Albéniz. de Falla, Granados) who profoundly influenced Evans in his approach to tonal colour.

The towering, and key, figure here is the jazz-loving Maurice Ravel, whose *oeuvre* is rich with the perfumes and colours of Spain; many regard Ravel as the supreme orchestrator of all time, and peacocking his heritage (his mother was a Basque) allowed the composer to demonstrate his extraordinary gifts. Three orchestral works are represented here, played by Orchestre National de l'Opéra de Paris, conducted by the great Manuel Rosenthal. Aside from a curiously draggy 'Boléro', they're very good: 'Alborada del gracioso' and the glorious Technicolor reverie of 'Rapsodie espagnole' are full of the requisite colour (as a bonus there's a lovely 'Pavane' with Julian Bream on Spanish guitar); together they demonstrate that Evans, a great tonal painter himself, drew heavily from the greatest chromaticist of them all. **Kevin Whitlock**

Gil and Miles

Various Artists
Black Jazz Records: The Complete Singles

Real Gone Music RGM-1597 (CD, 2 LP, DL)

★★★★

Various artists inc Gene Russell, Walter Bishop (p), Doug Carn (org, v), Jean Carn, Kellee Patterson (v), Rudolph Johnson (ts), Calvin Keys (g), Chester Thompson (org) and Cleveland Eaton (b). Rec. 1971-79

Along with Tribe and Strata East, Black Jazz is part of the holy trinity of independent labels that documented the work of countless important creative musicians ignored by the majors throughout the 1970s. Founded by the late pianist-producer Gene Russell, the imprint now stands as an inspiring beacon of African-American self-empowerment, from the name he chose to the beautiful, mostly monochrome design of the albums, that are highly collectable these days.

Real Gone, master diggers for the hip-hop generation, released many BJ titles a few years ago and this anthology is an excellent starter pack for whoever missed out first time round. In a word the bulk of the music kept acoustic jazz on an invaluable path that was virtuosic but soulfully accessible, making it clear Russell understood the importance of the likes of Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye and Gamble & Huff as clearly as he did that of John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter and Herbie Hancock.

The fact that Russell released 7" singles also shows he saw commercial appeal in his catalogue that was not at odds with artistic integrity. Hence the compilation features a version of one of the great Philly anthems, Billy Paul's 'Me And Mrs Jones', beautifully played by Russell on piano, alongside the finely constructed waltz 'Little B's Poem', sung by Jean Carn, the jazz singer who went on to enjoy major success as a soul diva, while organist-vocalist Doug Carn has an explicitly Traneish spirituality in his work. As for Rudolph Johnson, Walter Bishop, Cleveland Eaton, Calvin Keys and Chester Thompson, they are soloists who burn bright on material with smart, snappy funk inclinations but the somewhat overlooked singer Kellee Patterson, with her gilded tone and subtle phrasing, also sounds marvellous. A very welcome overview of a pioneering label, lest we forget. **Kevin Le Gendre**

Cootie Williams
Concerto For Cootie – Selected Recordings 1928-1962

Acrobat ACQCD182 (4 CD)

★★★★ RECOMMENDED

Cootie Williams (t, v, comp, ldr) with Jimmy Johnson & His Orchestra/The Jungle Band/ Duke Ellington & His Orchestra/ Six Jolly Jesters/ Duke Ellington & His Cotton Club Orchestra/Barney Bigard & His Jazzopaters/ Duke Ellington & His Famous Orchestra/ Cootie Williams & His Rug Cutters/The Gotham Stompers/Teddy Wilson & His Orchestra/Lionel Hampton & His Orchestra/Johnny Hodges & His Orchestra/Benny Goodman & His Sextet/Benny Goodman & His Orchestra//Leonard Feather's All Stars/ Cootie Williams & His Sextette/Cootie Williams & His Orchestra/ Dinah Washington and Cootie Williams Orchestra/Eddie Mack with Cootie Williams & Orchestra/Cootie and Rex/ Ronnie Gilbert/Cootie Williams/ Charlie Shavers & Coleman Hawkins/Stewart-Williams & Co/ Cootie Williams & Wini Brown/Duke Ellington. Rec. 1928-62

Acrobat's sumptuous 4-CD collection devoted to trumpeter and star Ellingtonian, Cootie Williams (1911-1985), states: "Features performances with Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, Charlie Christian, Charlie Parker, Pearl Bailey, Bud Powell, Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson, Rex Stewart, Johnny Hodges... and many more".

Many more indeed, over these 93 tracks, compiled by author Steve Bowie, whose biography of Williams is to be published by the University of Mississippi Press later this year. As he says, "This selection of music is just a small sample of his rich recorded legacy". Phew!

Williams tried various instruments until he alighted on the trumpet, his early promise enabling him to tour with the Young family band (alongside Lester Young) when only 14. By 1928 he was in New York, playing briefly with Chick Webb before joining Ellington in February 1929 and staying. It's from more or less this point that Bowie kicks off his choices, Williams taking on the Bubber Miley plunger-muted growl role in his solo work, his eerie sound inexorably linked with Ellington from then on.

For all his association with the 'wa-wa' style, Cootie's open playing, with its Armstrong influence was equally noteworthy, marking him out as a true jazz master, *viz* his jaunty work on 'Frolic Sam' by the Bigard-Ellington small group.

By 1940, having been extensively featured with the myriad Ducal offshoots and with the orchestra, whose greatest sides are all here, Williams attracted a one-year offer from Benny Goodman, then hugely successful, this placing him next to Christian et al in BG's marvellous sextet. 'Wholly Cats', with Basie on piano and Christian at his supple best sets the ball rolling, Goodman imperious.

A year later, Cootie launched his own big band, its theme 'Fly Right' later known as 'Epistrophy' and written by Thelonious Monk, suggesting some awareness of the new music, this cemented with the presence of Bud Powell as band pianist. Vinson's vocal on 'Red Blues' brought the band its biggest hit, even as it issued the first-ever commercial recording of Monk's 'Round Midnight', brought to them by Powell, Williams solemn on the theme.

When Vinson left briefly, Parker came in, the sole evidence of his presence, a sextet air-shot of 'Floogie Boo', a jump blues, Bird sounding at ease among these swing guys. Always exciting, the big band did well but was hampered by the recording ban and the military call-up, Williams eventually reducing to an R&B sextet, and disbanding in 1948.

Thereafter, he led a combo and was in demand for sessions with his fellow swing stars, these rounding out this marvellous compilation, track 93, a blues, marking his memorable return to the Ducal fold. If a number of tracks have a slightly curtailed cut-off and the booklet proof-reading could have been improved, there's sufficient here to confirm writer George T Simon's opinion, 'Cootie was a giant all right'. **Peter Vacher**

Capitol gains

Nancy Wilson
But Beautiful

Capitol/Pure Pleasure PPAN ST798 (LP) ★★★★

Nancy Wilson (v), Hank Jones (p), Gino Bertachini (g), Ron Carter (b) and Grady Tate (d). Rec. November 1969

Nancy Wilson

Peggy Lee
Is That All There Is?

Capitol/Pure Pleasure PPAN ST386 (LP) ★★★★

Peggy Lee (v), plus various uncredited musicians. Rec. 8 June 1967 – 15 October 1969

Two splendid Capitol albums, given the Pure Pleasure reissue treatment (with excellent sound and authentic packaging). The Nancy Wilson LP, made with a small group of top-notch jazzers, is often dismissed (as is Wilson herself) by the jazz police for veering too far into mainstream soul and pop; in both cases, this is an unfair charge. The balladic material she tackles here has impeccable jazz cred, consisting as it does of tunes by Ellington, Berlin, Arlen, Van Heusen and Gershwin; it's played and sung impeccably by all those present, and while it could be described as 'dinner party jazz', that's not always a bad thing. Seductive, warm and easy, it's a minor triumph.

Lee's record is more complex, as befits a singer of her intelligence. She knew which way the wind was blowing: by the late 1960s, Lee was 'our parents' music'. But she had a mega-hit with *Is That All There Is?* , its world-weary cyncism (the title track, featuring a superlative, sparse Randy Newman arrangement influenced by 1920s German cabaret, became a classic) and astute choice of contemporary material – brilliant versions of George Harrison's 'Something', Neil Diamond's 'Brother Love's Traveling Salvation Show', Leiber & Stoller's 'I'm a Woman' (another smash), and Randy Newman's 'Love Story' – struck a chord with record buyers, including young hip Boomers. The moody remake of Lee's 1940s hit 'Don't Smoke in Bed' was another shrewd choice.

Is That All There Is? comprises essentially the same jazz-pop with which Peggy made her name in the 1940s, but skilfully updated and brought into the (then) modern world with huge commercial *and* artistic success. Absolutely superb. **Kevin Whitlock**

jazzwise

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Classical

BROUGHT TO YOU BY GRAMOPHONE

Timo Andres
The Blind Banister

Nonesuch (7559 78999-0 • 49')

Unsurprisingly, the approach one hears in Timo Andres's piano-playing also comes through in his own music. Composed in 2015, *The Blind Banister* draws on Beethoven's Second Piano Concerto, exploring what Andres has called a stylistic 'fault line' between the late classical style of the concerto and the more 'modern'-sounding cadenza incorporated by Beethoven some 20 years later.

The first movement starts innocently enough with a series of stammering, staircase-like suspensions announced sotto voce on solo piano. The stylistic fault lines become more pronounced as the music unfolds, however, with Andres' music exposing ever deeper and wider stylistic cracks. Caught in a perpetual cycle of tension and release, these harmonic suspensions eventually break free towards the end of the movement in a climax full of Beethovenian chaos and drama.

A similar narrative is played out in the second movement, oscillating patterns providing the basis for a Rubik's cube of interlocking harmonies. This time, resolution comes in the form of a powerful cadenza full of falling polymetric cascades that call to mind the influence of Ives, Nancarrow and John Adams, while the finale telescopically reprises the material contained in the opening two movements in a single panoramic sweep.

With the Metropolis Ensemble under conductor Andrew Cyr in full control throughout, and Andres on top of his game, I cannot recommend this album highly enough. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

Jean-Yves Thibaudet/ Michael Feinstein
Gershwin Rhapsody

Decca (487 0075 • 47')

Concert pianist meets cabaret star sounds like an idea conceived by an eager A&R exec in search of a fresh angle. Yet this inspired fusion of Thibaudet's virtuosity and Feinstein's on-the-road-honed improvisatory skills, to celebrate the centenary of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* turns out to be a musical marriage, if not made in heaven, then coming close to it.

Nor does any quibble one might harbour as to the occasional imprecision in its execution mitigate against this double act, for they know for certain how to put on a show! In whatever union, they sail through this Gershwin celebration with wit and style.

Feinstein sings in his unique transparent style, the lyric, as ever, uppermost in his mind. In 'Someone To Watch Over Me' he sings a couple of unfamiliar lines, presumably to accommodate the fact that it was written for Gertrude Lawrence, but as Ira Gershwin's amanuensis he has authority on his side.

Two medleys reference the Rhapsody itself. The most elaborate, by New Yorker Tedd Firth, features both pianists in an inspired Lisztian spectacular feeding 'The Man I Love' into 'Rhapsody in Blue'. A swinging account of 'Sweet and Lowdown' captures the spirit of the 1920s to a T before setting up 'Clap Yo' Hands' in a merger with 'Fascinating Rhythm'.

The lush sound from the Decca engineers spreads the icing on the cake of this glorious confection, communicated and performed with consummate skill by Jean-Yves and Michael. **Adrian Edwards**

World Music

BROUGHT TO YOU BY SONGLINES

Newen Afrobeat
Grietas

Lichens Family ç ★★★★

Celebrating 15 years since their formation in Santiago, Newen Afrobeat present *Grietas*, their dynamic fifth studio album. Enriched by a collaboration with artists like Lido Pimienta, Dele Sosimi (of Fela Kuti's Egypt 80 band), Chico Cesar and Joe Vasconcellos, the 13-piece Chilean ensemble weave a vibrant tapestry of Afro-Latin influences, spirited rhythms, horn-infused melodies and socially-charged messages.

The title track, meaning 'cracks', stands out as a potent call for environmental protection. The song is elevated by Lido Pimienta's sublime voice, her unique tone adding extra spice to an already exhilarating composition as she interjects on the inequality faced by the communities most vulnerable to global warming. The opening guitar, reminiscent of Touareg desert blues, suddenly transitions into Newen Afrobeat's signature Afro-Latin soundscape, highlighted by mesmerising saxophone licks. 'Mare Mare' features climactic progressions and intense flute motifs, while 'Widin' explores a funkier ambience, peppered with electric guitar bends and bass riffs. 'Lloverá' unfolds as a musical tug-of-war, shifting between Afrobeat intensity and softer Latin pop sounds during the verses.

Grietas solidifies Newen Afrobeat's role as global Afrobeat ambassadors and serves as a rhythmic manifesto and a testament to their unwavering dedication to social and environmental activism. **Lucy Hallam**

Track To Try: 'Grietas'

Kolonel Djafaar
Getaway

Batov Records ★★★★

The simplest and most common description of Kolonel Djafaar's sound is as a meeting of Ethio-jazz and Afrobeat. And that's true: the Ethiopian side is clear in those distinctive pentatonic scales, the Nigerian in the use of the small but meaty horn section (baritone and tenor saxophones, trumpet, occasional trombone), and the rhythms are a tight mix of Yoruba and Afro-Latin styles beloved of Fela and Mulatu, respectively.

There's a lot more to *Getaway* than that, though. There's also a potent strain of Anatolian-Levantine psycho-surf, fluttering in through guitar and synth lines, and delving deeper, there are nods to reggae, Cuban jazz, Baobab-esque West African dance band, and even an unsettling fairground waltz.

Just reading this list of musical ingredients, you might ho-hum. None of these individual fusions are particularly novel or untested; we've heard them before. But here they're polished to a cinematic shine, with no element clashing against the rest.

It's very tidy, and it's all neatly encapsulated in the opener, 'Urban Dweller', a great intro to the album, showing off the breadth of the band's explorations without feeling overloaded.

The album ends on a pretty abrupt fade-out, a small disappointment when it feels like Kolonel Djafaar could jam out for much longer. **Jim Hickson**

Track To Try: 'Urban Dweller'

THE PLAYER

MEILANA GILLARD

The London-born, Ohio-raised, NYC-educated saxophonist has recently been making waves with Irish group, the RBG Trio. Here she tells **David Gallant** about how she got started and her favourite instruments over the years

"From as far back as I can remember, I was annoyingly drawn to pianos and keyboards," starts Gillard. "Making for awkward visits to anywhere that had one. I *had* to play it, or would throw a knockdown, drag-out tantrum!"

Seeing their daughter's clear obsession with the keys, Gillard's parents promptly bought her a small Casio instrument and Peavy amp when she was about six, which was followed, a year later, by formal piano lessons.

"I initially wanted to be a concert pianist," she explains. "That was until it was time to choose a band instrument two years later, just before I turned 11. I had heard the tenor saxophone on some big band records my grandpa listened to and on some of mum's collection, so I knew that's what I wanted to play; even though many attempts were made to convince me to play alto – or even flute! But I wouldn't be swayed. The tenor was about 3/4 the size of me, so I had to rest it on my foot while playing seated, but I wouldn't put it down."

She continues: "We didn't get private lessons at school however, the band programme was set up to prepare you for Years 7-12 (ages 13-18) where you'd be in the Big Band. The head of our music programme was a lover of Artie Shaw, Glen Miller, Basie and all the Big Band greats. In the high school jazz band, he assembled a 400-plus dance band book that had everything from 'Hay Burner' to 'Moten Swing' and so many other key tunes. From 13-18, I was getting to call a set every morning, like I was on a gig in my high school band. I realise that's quite a unique experience."

During her teenage years, Gillard started to 'dep' in the local big bands. "I was a member of all-state ensembles and youth jazz ensembles. I also started to put on my own small gigs as well."

> ***"From ages 13-18, I was getting to call a set every morning, like I was on a gig in my high school band"***

Gillard went on to study at Ohio State university, before going on to finish her degree at the New School in NYC.

Having heard so much about her early musical experiences, I was keen to know about her choice of instruments. "I got my first tenor saxophone, a Bundy, in 1992. Then in 1997 for my 16th birthday, my parents surprised me with a Selmer Super Action 80 Series II alto. I still have that horn today. In 2000, I got a Selmer Series III tenor in black lacquer. It smelt really weird and honestly, didn't play that great. In 2003 I was carrying it in a Protec case when the strap broke while going down the subway steps, and the horn just tumbled and tumbled. That horn was in bad shape and I already didn't like it."

Needing to find another horn fast, and after seeing a listing for a pristine silver-plated Mark VI at Saxquest, Gillard took out a student loan and flew to St. Louis. "I got there, played the Mark VI and it sounded dead to me. So I played all their other vintage horns (they had so many!), and I settled on a Selmer Balanced Action from 1939 that was just the sound I was looking for. It's a perfect fit for me and is the same horn I play today." Gillard tells me that she also owns a Selmer Series III Soprano, and for 'doubling', a Buffet R13 clarinet and a Pearl Closed Hole Intermediate Flute with a silver head joint.

When it comes to saxophone mouthpieces, on tenor Gillard employs a Ted Klum Tonamax Hard Rubber mouthpiece with a vintage Selmer Magnitone Ligature.

"The ligature is great, because you can adjust the size to fit a number of mouthpieces. It fits my second mouthpiece, which is a vintage Selmer Soloist short shank. On alto I play another vintage Selmer Soloist short shank." Reeds are Rigotti 'Gold' jazz 3.5 medium. "They make consistently good reeds and since all reeds are so expensive, I work on my reeds to make sure each of them is great. I love the Reed Geek and Vandoren glass surface file."

Gillard owns a substantial effects arsenal, that includes a Boss Harmonist PS-6, "which allows me to fix an interval, so I can play a 'voicing' above the electric bass"; a Boss RE-20 Space Echo which she uses connected to a foot switch to tap in tempos, "and I play a lot with the flutter and wow functions to get crazy sounds."

Then there's the Boss Super Octave OC-3, to add a deep octave that follows whatever she plays: "This really makes a statement, so I use it as a compositional tool to expand the ensemble sound. It also sounds great when used in conjunction with my Electro-Harmonix Q-Tron+, which is an envelope 'wah' filter." This all goes into an Electro Harmonix Super Ego+ "which is a magical little pedal I use to 'latch', which allows me to stack and layer notes and play/comp chord voicings.

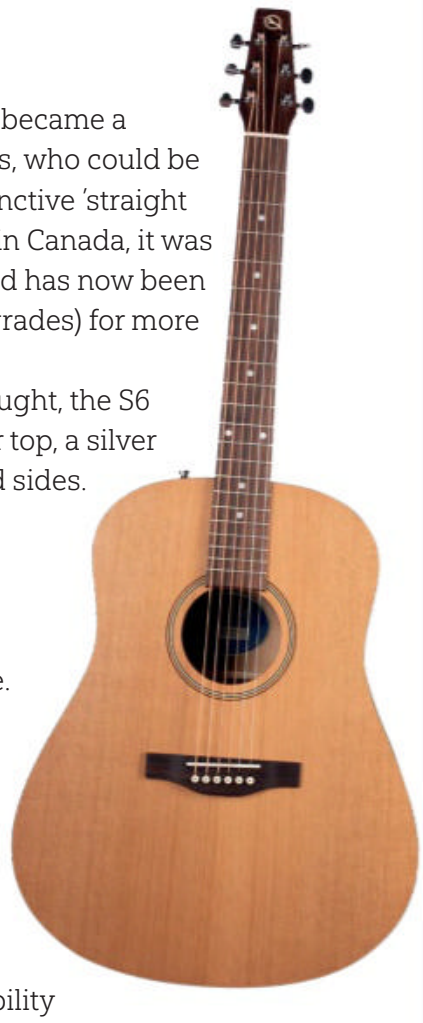
"Finally, all that is fed into my Boss RC-600 Loop Station which I don't only just use to create live loops." And there's more! "I also have custom effects stored for each tune like ping-pong delays, stereo-filtering phasers, and just some nice reverbs. It really gives me so much control to shape the sound."

Photo: Monika S. Jakubowska

Instrument News & Reviews

David Gallant checks out the latest instruments and accessories for serious amateur and professional musicians

Seagull S6 Original acoustic guitar



The Seagull S6 first appeared in 1982 and became a popular choice for many celebrated artists, who could be seen playing the instrument with its distinctive 'straight pull' (almost!) headstock. Made by Godin in Canada, it was seen as the flagship of the Seagull line and has now been in continuous production (with a few upgrades) for more than 40 years.

Modelled on the large bodied Dreadnought, the S6 comes with a pressure treated solid cedar top, a silver leaf maple neck and wild cherry back and sides. The rosewood fretboard with its spacious 45.72mm nut carries 21 medium frets and has large MOP position markers. There are six individual nickel plated encased tuners and a nicely fluted 'wingtip' bridge. Black binding with a white tramline, a tortoiseshell pickguard and strap buttons to the upper front bout and base complete the picture.

Our sample instrument arrived with a set of surprisingly light gauge strings for an acoustic flat top; however, this turned out to be perfectly suited to the S6. Playability is a dream, with a fast, smooth shallow 'C' neck and neatly finished fretwork to the fretboard. However, it is the incredible resonance of this instrument that really captures the imagination (and presumably the hearts of players). Rarely have we come across an acoustic flat top guitar that is as responsive as the S6. The sound is focussed, loud and full and typical of the 'dreadnought' model, with a strikingly bright treble and a powerful solid bass.

The S6 may not immediately be seen as a 'jazz' guitar. But if your bag is acoustic jazz *á la* Django, we would strongly recommend that you give this remarkable instrument a run for its money. We feel more than sure that you won't be disappointed!

www.jhs.co.uk

Dean Markley Blue Steel guitar strings

For some odd reason, the Dean Markley brand has never quite struck as big a chord with the UK market as one might expect. A popular string on home turf in the US, it's one of those products that British players have missed out on over the years.

Like many similar products, the string has been treated during manufacture to make it both longer-lasting and more responsive. The Dean Markley cryogenic process uses a quick blast of liquid nitrogen to, in their words, "re-align and re-organise the molecular structure" of the string.

But does this process really have any noticeable sonic effect? The strings certainly feel good under the fingers, are very responsive and deliver a clear, bright sound. So the answer is, "yes".

Our verdict? Try a set. We reckon you'll re-order!

www.ivormairants.co.uk

Légère French Cut Reeds

We tested Légère's American Cut reeds some months ago, so we were intrigued to find if there was any real difference between those and the French cut.

Légère has always presented its products well, and the 'French Cut' reed is no exception. Given the cost of a single reed, and the fact that there is only one reed per pack the company can afford to! As always Légère has a great exchange policy, so if the reed you have is a little too hard or soft you can exchange it for a different strength. The ¼ strength increments help with fine adjustment.

The big difference these reeds have as opposed to standard cane reeds is that the reed comes in its own bespoke storage container. Each comes with a solid plastic container that holds and protects the piece when not in use. It's easy to use, practical and functional; and it is particularly helpful as it's not good parctice to store synthetic reeds with reeds that need moisture.

The French Cut comes in the translucent plastic Légère has always used. The reed is well marked with the strength on the top. The main round body of cane reeds (normally the bark part) varies and we often find them too thick. As you would expect from an artificial reed, the lay is perfectly flat and consistent, which is certainly a plus point. With cane reeds moisture content is critical. With synthetic ones this is not an issue, however we felt that as the reed warmed up physically with air flow, it seemed to get more malleable and softer.

When it comes to playability, as you can imagine with a synthetic product, consistency is the byword. Whatever sound you get from your set up, it seems to be consistently the same. With a metal mouthpiece and ligature, the sound was marginally darker. With an ebonite mouthpiece it seemed slightly brighter. The response and projection was good, with a good altissimo sound on the metal mouthpiece. This was unexpected as previous experience with plastic reeds proved very poor in the altissimo register.

If you are after consistency, and let's face it, most of us are, then these reeds are fine. However, if you are looking for the flexibility of a cane reed to get a lot of variation in the 'play', then these reeds may not be for you. For many situations they would however be perfect, particularly If you are a doubler and have to switch instruments during a session, the Légère reed solves the issues of the reeds drying out while the instrument is resting.

The debate about cane vs synthetic will no doubt continue. Regardless, if you use synthetic reeds all the time, or just have one as a spare, this reed is a useful one to have around.

www.légère.com

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SEPT 14TH	ORPHY ROBINSON'S "THE VIBES DESCRIBES"
OCT 26TH	ART THEMEN'S "THE ART OF ART"
NOV 23RD	JAZZ EAST "EAST LONDON FRINGE FESTIVAL"
DEC 14TH	THE NJA LARGE ENSEMBLE "ANNUS FANTASTIK"

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Live Reviews

Clockwise from left: Misha Mullov-Abbado and Alice Zawadzki; Emma Rawicz, Andy Sheppard with Michel Benita, and John Etheridge with Vimala Rowe

Photos: Tim Dickeson

Bristol Jazz Festival

The Tobacco Factory, Bristol

The first Covid lockdown blew away the scheduled 2020 Bristol International Jazz and Blues Festival, sideswiping the organisation's finances and morale. This relaunch event, while necessarily downsized, aimed to restore both and, with a well-chosen line-up in a new and sympathetic venue, it is fair to say it succeeded. Combining ticketed and free events the Festival kept Bristol's Tobacco Factory Theatre building rammed from the moment second line outfit Brass Junkies' street parade opened the weekend.

First up, hot new talent: Ezra Collective's Ife Ogunjobi's full-toned trumpet brought invigorating Afro-jazz grooves before an astonishing performance from tenor saxophonist Emma Rawicz. Her fluency of style and imagination as soloist, buoyed up by Ivo Neame's piano, Freddie Jensen's bass and the equally sinuous drumming of Asaf Sirkis captivated her audience.

Distinctive and engaging vocalists were an evident theme. Alice Zawadzki brought elements of theatre to her set of narrative songs from around Europe, adding atmospheric violin and vocalising to her expressive singing, while Vimala Rowe ranged even farther to include Indian classical, Aramaic and Swahili styles in partnership with the ever-dazzling guitar of John Etheridge. Both singers had an easy informality with their audiences but would never compete with Clare Teal's assured repartee, bantering her way between songs like Annie Ross' hyperfast 'My Analyst Told Me' and a moody 'Tainted Love', her tight quintet embellished by Kansas Smitty guitarist (and former local hero) Dave Archer.

Originally a one-off festival commission for 2018, the Electric Lady Big Band's powerhouse jazz-rock Hendrix arrangements have gained a life of their own. They returned with guitarist Denny Ilett leading a wealth of talent and drummer Daisy Palmer's exuberant contributions a repeated showstopper. Similarly high energy came from Dennis Rollins' Velocity Trio, the hip-hop fusioneers Renegade Brass Band and Bristol's Snazzback, the latter revealing a more tightened production sound for the occasion. Snazzback guitarist Eli Jitsuto had a busy weekend, reappearing in a boogaloo trio with Dan Moore's Hammond and Matt Brown drumming as well as featuring behind the impressively tight contemporary Gospel choir The Good Stuff.

Jitsuto even popped up at the jam sessions which rounded off each day's programme co-ordinated by the Jazz Defenders, a quintet whose own set was a crowd-pleasing masterclass in classic Blue Note-era hard bop. But the best pleased crowd of the weekend greeted Bristol's prodigal son Andy Sheppard, lately moved to Portugal. His trio with pianist Rita Marcotulli and Michel Benita on bass effortlessly channeled a sequence of elegant compositions gently honed to perfection. Perhaps it was the love in the room, perhaps the once-familiar surroundings – whatever, it was a flawless reminder of why he is a real local hero. **Tony Benjamin**

The Modern Art Orchestra/Trio Fröx

Opus Jazz Club, Budapest, Hungary

Opus is a classic jazz club, serving food, dedicated to listening, and taking up two floors of the Budapest Music Center. The Modern Art Orchestra (MAO) is their house band, its *Legendary Albums* series dedicated to presenting key works in the canon. Celebrating Shorty Rogers And His Giants, they revisited *The Swinging Mr. Rogers*, from 1955, on Atlantic Records. It's the trumpeter's centenary year in 1924, so now's the prime time to breeze through this carefully poised West Coast jazz classic. MAO provided a quintet slice of its ranks to draw on the inspiration of the LP's line-up, which included Jimmy Giuffre and Shelly Manne.

The album was spread across two very short sets, with 'Isn't It Romantic' (Rodgers & Hart) made unusual by its baritone saxophone solo, while 'Not Really The Blues' (Johnny Mandel) was sparky and swift, with liquid tenor and acrobatic trumpet solos, climaxing with a heated horn exchange. The second set surpassed, possessing greater focus. Rogers excelled at matching detailed expression with driving vim, and this quintet captured those qualities even more during their second set. 'My Heart Stood Still' had a breezy closeness, with another stand-out baritone solo. This quintet pays attention to space and pauses.

The following night was a big contrast, rooted in Hungarian tradition, but ultimately all jazz. Trio Fröx invited Jenő Lisztes to play cimbalom (Hungarian hammered dulcimer), although his actual approach turned out to be a disappointment. Lisztes was set on making his instrument fill the jazz piano role, removing its folkish qualities, smoothing out its sound.

He also, annoyingly, spent the entire set-break tuning-up, drowning out the intermission music. The audience needs a break rather than a clash of two sound sources. Otherwise, the trio played well, featuring 'Isfahan', electric bass immediately lending the funk, or even the dub, soprano saxophone spiking, and the cimbalom sounding more characterful. Reedsman Gábor Weisz would sometimes vocalise, in his original style, wordless and spiritually seeking. A calypso bounce made things frothier, and then Weisz switched to end-blown flute, seething with a resonant folk buzz. The night climaxed with what can only be called Ornettian Bill Haley rock'n'roll flavours. **Martin Longley**

Herbie Hancock

Chicago Symphony Center

For his 14th gig at his hometown's most illustrious venue, Herbie Hancock – who debuted at Orchestra Hall in knee pants aged 11 (playing Mozart's Coronation concerto shortly before Queen Elizabeth II ascended in 1952) – brought a crack sextet: Terence Blanchard, James Genus, session drummer/hiphop producer Trevor Lawrence, the remarkable Lionel Loueke and saxophonist Devin Daniels, a masters student at the pianist's eponymous Institute at UCLA.

At 83 (you'd scarcely notice) Hancock seemed supremely at ease, yet rebuked himself for talking too much, lest wife Jessica, in attendance, rolled her eyes. Cunningly, he bypassed that issue by transmitting playful philosophical badinage via the vocoder he pioneered on 1978's 'Sunlight', after revisiting 'Come Running To Me'.

Hancock learnt the hard way, losing money touring his uncompromising 'Mwandishi' sextet in the early 1970s, thence pivoted to Headhunters paydirt, so he minced few bones about exhuming the populist (and equivocally lewd) remit of that funky concept here, deploying 'Chameleon' as the evening's leitmotif. Earlier he grazed 'Butterfly' and, momentarily, 'Rhapsody in Blue' (once performed opposite Lang Lang in this hall), and Loueke extrapolated 'Rock It' replete with Xhosa clicks.

Central to the concert was an epic interrogation of the metrically techy 'Actual Proof,' inspired by Hancock's trust in the outcome of Buddhist chant. At the outset, the leader laid back, establishing groove and counterpoint, showcasing sidemen, (Daniels' ideas notably knotty and audacious), but during 'Actual Proof' and in funky keytar face-off with Loueke – they pogo-ed in front of each other, mock competitively – there were no prisoners.

A wonderfully energised concert, crowd-pleasing, sure to trample curmudgeons, yet "do you think he'll ever play solo or trio again?" echoed from an elderly patron. As with young-at-heart *compadré*, the late Wayne Shorter (Blanchard's take on 'Footprints' featured, by the by), there is little 'elderly' about Hancock. When his grandson invaded from the wings at the end of a tremendous two hour set, he skipped across the stage alongside the toddler, like an evergreen teenager.

Michael Jackson

Herbie hits a home-town run

Jazzahead! 2024

Bremen, Germany

This year's partner country for Jazzahead!, the Netherlands, loudly said goodbye to the Bremen trade fair. Animating Cuban mambo sounded in the venerable Hanseatic Hall of the congress center. It was a lot of fun, mainly because trumpeter Maite Hontalé led the Dutch youth jazz orchestra NJJO (Nationaal Jeugd Jazz Orkest) at this gala concert. Honaté lived in Colombia for many years and is a specialist in Latin American music. She came back to her homeland five years ago and, after suffering a burnout, never really wanted to pick up the trumpet again.

But fortunately she is playing again. And in Bremen the NJJO skillfully manoeuvers through original material such as Hontalé´s hit "Nochecita" and fiery Cuban mambo. The 10 big band brass players placed on three small platforms frame the band on three sides with a quadruple percussion section. Visually it looks good.

Likewise, the partially seated Hanseatic Hall quickly becomes a dance floor. There is an exuberant atmosphere. The two star guests of this gala concert, the Cuban pianist Ramón Valle and the flautist Ronald Snijders, who was born in Suriname but has been living in the Netherlands for decades, provide short, acclaimed solo highlights. But it is primarily the Dutch youth jazz orchestra that grabs the audience - at the latest with their 'Descarga', a rousing Afro-Cuban jam session at the end of the performance. **(CG)**

One of the problems with a showcase-packed, multi-day event like Jazzahead! is that there is too much music going on, and one has to either be highly selective, or else resigned to catching 10 minutes of an act before hotfooting it across town to briefly catch another. Thus, I was only able to see part of Sultan Stevenson's set; the sound was poor, but what I saw of the young UK pianist demonstrated his talent and potential. Likewise Danish vocalist Nana Rashid, even if she isn't quite the finished article just yet.

Also excellent (in fact they were *so* good I saw them twice!) were Scotland's Mama Terra, led by pianist Marco Cafolla; their exciting, accessible take on spritual jazz is going to storm the festival circuit. Mightily impressive too, were Flemish trombonist Nabou Claerhout's Trombone Ensemble. The eight-piece group's guitar-bass-drums rhythm section and four trombone (plus bass trombone and bass tuba) frontline transcended novelty and were able, via a combination of slickly inventive musicianship and astute melding of swing and the avant-garde, to maintain interest over a full set.

But by far and away the most impressive act on show over the three nights was the Shuteen Erdenebaatar Quartet. The 26-year-old Mongolian-born, Munich-resident pianist and her outstanding band wowed a packed hall with selections from her brilliant debut album *Rising Sun* (Motéma 2023). By turns lyrical, virtuosic, playful and powerful, originals such as 'In A Time Warp', 'Rising Sun' and 'Ups And Downs' demonstrated her enormous compositional as well as playing talents. Shuteen is a real star for the future – so watch out for her. No wonder Motéma label boss Jana Herzen was beaming with pride by the end. **(KW)**

Report by Christopher Giese and Kevin Whitlock

Maite Hontalé

Photo: Jan Rathke

Gig Guide JUNE 24

Rosie Hanley previews the must-see gigs and concerts. Send future listings to **roseanne.hanley@gmail.com**

All listings are run free but due to space restrictions cannot be guaranteed to appear – expanded gig listings can be found at **www.jazzwise.com/gig-guide**

Alina Bzhezhinska and Tony Kofi
Peggy's Skylight, 6 June

SATURDAY

1 Alec Harper
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

1 Milne-Glendinning Band
Prohibition Bar, Pink Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne

1 Enrico Tomasso's Swing Company
St Augustine's Parish Centre, Larchfield Street, Darlington

1 RUM Band
Verdict Jazz Club, 159 Edward Street, Kemptown, Brighton

1 Harry Diplock Trio
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

1 Fergus McCreadie Trio
Turner Sims, University of Southampton, Southampton

1 Beny sings Beny (evening) South London Jazz Orchestra (lunchtime)
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

1 José James presents 1978
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

1 Lawrence Jones Quartet
World Heart Beat Embassy Gardens, 3 Ponton Road, London SW11

1 ONJ Steve Lehman Ex Machina
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

SUNDAY

2 MSK
Globe, Railway Street, Newcastle upon Tyne

2 Seonaid Aitken Ensemble
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, Soho, London W1

2 Claire Martin (evening) Shireen Francis (lunchtime)
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

2 Pete Allen Jazz Band
The Donnington Valley Hotel and Spa, Newbury

MONDAY

3 John Garner and John Pope
Yamaha Music School, Seaforth Street, Blyth

3 Ronnie Scott's Jazz Orchestra
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

3 Dino Baptiste
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

3 Pete Allen Jazz Band
The Conservative Club, Sidmouth

TUESDAY

4 Graham Harvey
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

4 Jonathan Barber and Vision Ahead
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

4 The Red Stripe Band
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

4 Chris Batchelor's Zoetic
East Side Jazz Club, 2 Harvey Road, London E11

4 Mark Crooks Quartet
Watermill Jazz, Betchworth Park Golf Club, Dorking

WEDNESDAY

5 SuperLocrian
SpiceJazz at Crazy Coqs, Brasserie Zedel, 21 Sherwood Street, London W1

5 Universal Time
Jazz at The Lescar, 303 Sharrowvale Road, Sheffield

5 Tomos Williams Cwmwl Tystion
The Lost ARC, Old Drill Hall, Bridge Street, Rhayader

5 Lucy Moon
St George's Bristol, Great George Street, Bristol

5 Cyrille Aimée
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, Soho, London W1

5 Samba Azul
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

5 Emma Brown
Seven Arts, 31 Harrogate Road, Leeds

5 Ant Law, Alex Hitchcock, Jasper Høiby and Sun-Mi Hong
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

THURSDAY

6 Jason Rebello
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

6-8 The James Taylor Quartet
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

6 Tomos Williams Cwmwl Tystion
Theatr Soar, Pontmorlais W, Merthyr Tydfil

6 Alina Bzhezhinska and Tony Kofi
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

6-8 Brian Simpson
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

6 NikNak plus Fergus Quill Trio
Cobalt Studios, Boyd Street, Newcastle upon Tyne

6 Karim Saber Quintet
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

FRIDAY

7 Daniel John Martin with Swing Manouche
Saltburn Community Hall, Albion Terrace, Saltburn-by-Sea

7 House of the Black Gardenia
Hoochie Coochie, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne

7 Julian Siegel Quartet
Verdict Jazz Club, 159 Edward Street, Kemptown, Brighton

7 Tomos Williams Cwmwl Tystion
Dora Stoutzker Concert Hall, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, North Road, Cardiff

7 The Vernon Spring and Gwilym Gold
Kings' Place, 90 York Way, London N1

7 TC and The Groove Family
Jazz Cafe, 5 Parkway, London NW1

7 Courtney Pine
St George's Bristol, Great George Street, Bristol

7 Charlie Pyne Quartet
Birmingham Jazz, 1000 Trades, 16 Frederick Street, Birmingham

7 Jalen Ngonda
Newcastle University Student's Union, Newcastle

7 Beverley Skeete
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

7 Pete Allen Jazz Band
Tavistock Town Hall, Bedford Square, Tavistock

7 Alison Rayner Quintet
Chichester Jazz Club, The Pallant Suite, Freemason's Hall, 7 South Pallant, Chichester

SATURDAY

8 Strictly Smokin' Big Band
Arc, Dovecot Street, Stockton-on-Tees

8 Jason Isaacs Mini Big Band
Tyne Theatre, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne

8 Roger Beaujolais
Verdict Jazz Club, 159 Edward Street, Kemptown, Brighton

8 Tomos Williams Cwmwl Tystion
Cafe Oto, 18-22 Ashwin Street, London E8

8 Binker Golding
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

8 Huw Warren
The Hive Music and Media Centre, Belmont, Shrewsbury

8 Alina Bzhezhinska and Tony Kofi
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

8 Ese & The Vooduu People
Bankside Open Spaces Festival, Flat Iron Square, London SE1

SUNDAY

9 Rachel Calladine
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

9 Threeway feat Steve Waterman, Steve Lodder and Ben Crosland
Wylde Green URC, Sutton Coldfield

9 Jamie Toms Quartet
Globe, Railway Street, Newcastle upon Tyne

9-11 Ray Gelato
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

9 Equal Spirits
Marylebone Theatre, Rudolf Steiner House, London NW1

9 Ian Shaw (evening) Sarah Jane Eveleigh (lunchtime)
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

9 Hot Club du Nord
Glasshouse, St Mary's Square, Gateshead Quays, Gateshead

9 Dave Bristow Quintet
Seven Arts, 31 Harrogate Road, Leeds

MONDAY

10 Daniel John Martin with Swing Manouche
Black Bull, Bridge Street, Blaydon

10 Thunderthumbs
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

TUESDAY

11 Dave Storey Trio
Fougou Jazz, Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay

11 Nick Smart Sextet
East Side Jazz Club, 2 Harvey Road, London E11

11 Ben Sidran presents Rainmaker
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

11 Dave Bristow
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

11 Espen Eriksen Trio with Andy Sheppard
Watermill Jazz, Betchworth Park Golf Club, Dorking

11 Richard Fairhurst Trio
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

1 Tomos Williams Cwmwl Tystion

Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth University, Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth

Welsh trumpeter Tomos Williams sets out on tour with the third and final instalment of his ground-breaking *Cwmwl Tystion* project. Prog-jazz bass boss Melvin Gibbs and Vietnamese guitar star Nguyên Lê join young Welsh vocalists Eadyth Crawford and Mared Williams alongside Mark O'Connor on drums with live visuals from Simon Proffitt for an immersive live performance, exploring Welsh identity and history. The tour begins in Bangor (May 30) and Wrexham (May 31) before heading to Aberystwyth and other venues later in June.

10 John Surman

Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, Soho, London W1

Composer and multi-instrumentalist John Surman is a central figure in European jazz, having won many accolades in his long and illustrious career, that includes winning the prestigious Ivor Novello Jazz Award, for his mastery of the baritone saxophone and his body of original works. Earlier this year, Surman released his latest album *Words Unspoken* (ECM) – adding another beautiful record to his already impressive discography. For this performance he'll be joined by guitarist Rob Luft, drummer Thomas Strønen and Rob Waring on vibes.

WEDNESDAY

12 Paulo Morello with Jim Mullen
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

12 Bryony Jarman-Pinto plus Emily Tran Quintet
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

12 Radhika de Saram Quartet
Jazz at The Lescar, 303 Sharrowvale Road, Sheffield

12 New Focus
Cryer Arts Centre, High Street, Carshalton

12 Nishla Smith (early evening) Espen Eriksen Trio with Andy Sheppard (late evening)
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

12 Adrian York, Paul Whitten and Mark Fletcher
Fleece Jazz, Stoke-by-Nayland Hotel, Colchester

12 Dave Storey Trio
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

THURSDAY

13-14 Shez Raja feat Guthrie Govan
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

13 New Focus
Abbey Hill United Reformed Church, Abbey Hill, Kenilworth

13 Matt Carter Octet
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

13 Jay Rayner Sextet
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

13 Brandon Allen Quartet
Music Spoken Here, The Marrs Bar, 12 Pierpoint Street, Worcester

13 Ed Motta
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

13 Tom Cawley
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

FRIDAY

14 Strictly Smokin' Big Band
Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Beaumont Street, Hexham

14 La Via Del Ferro (early evening) Jay Phelps (late evening)
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

14 Chris Batchelor's Zoetic
Birmingham Jazz, 1000 Trades, 16 Frederick Street, Birmingham

14 New Focus
The Crypt, St Giles Church, Camberwell Church Street, London SE5

14 Amrit Kaur
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

14 Shirley Smart and Robert Mitchell
Verdict Jazz Club, 159 Edward Street, Kemptown, Brighton

14 Guildhall Jazz Vocal Ensembles feat MOSS
Milton Court Theatre, Silk Street, London EC2

14 Trio HLK feat Dame Evelyn Glennie
Kings' Place, 90 York Way, London N1

14 Customs House Big Band
Customs House, Mill Dam, South Shields

14 Mark Williams Trio
Old Library, Auckland Castle, Market Place, Bishop Auckland

SATURDAY

15 Quentin Collins
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

15 Phil Robson's Organ Trio
Mjazz, Hound Dog, 6 Friar Gate, Derby

15 Courtney Pine
Union Chapel, 19b Compton Terrace, London N1

15 Louise Dodds and Elchin Shirinov
Magy's Farm, 59 Dechomet Road, County Down

15 Sara Oschlag
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

15 Alessio Menconi and Nigel Price Quartet
Verdict Jazz Club, 159 Edward Street, Kemptown, Brighton

15 RC and the Gritz
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

15 Ian Shaw
The Astor Theatre, Stanhope Road, Deal, Kent

SUNDAY

16 Gaz Hughes Trio (afternoon)
Globe, Railway Street, Newcastle upon Tyne

16 Edgar Macias Quintet
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

16 Louise Dodds and Elchin Shirinov
Hampstead Heath Church, 84 Heath Street, London NW3

16 Natalie Williams' Soul Family
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, Soho, London W1

16 Gaz Hughes Trio (evening)
Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Beaumont Street, Hexham

16 Natalie Duncan (evening) Lauren Bush (lunchtime)
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

MONDAY

17 Mathias Højgaard Jensen Quartet
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

17-20 Buddy Rich Big Band feat Cathy Rich and Gregg Potter
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

TUESDAY

18 Barry Green
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

18 The David Gordon Trio
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

18 Dee Byrne
Turner Sims, University of Southampton, Southampton

18 Brandon Allen Quartet
East Side Jazz Club, 2 Harvey Road, London E11

18 Mark Nightingale Quintet
Watermill Jazz, Betchworth Park Golf Club, Dorking

WEDNESDAY

19 Phil Robson's Organ Trio
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

19 Josephine Davies, Martin Pyne and David Beebee
Jazz at The Lescar, 303 Sharrowvale Road, Sheffield

19 Resolution 88
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

19 NONUNONU
Band on the Wall, 25 Swan Street, Manchester

19-23 Glasgow Jazz Festival: Fergus McCreadie and more to be announced
Various venues, Glasgow

19 Tori Freestone and Alcyona Mick
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

19 Phil Merriman Trio
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

19 Richard Ormrod and Colin Byrne
Seven Arts, 31 Harrogate Road, Leeds

THURSDAY

20 Ese & The Vooduu People
Crazy Coqs, Brasserie Zedel, 20 Sherwood Street, London W1

20 Ben Holder Trio
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

20 Threeway feat Steve Waterman, Steve Lodder and Ben Crosland
Jazz Coventry, The Albany Club, Coventry

20 Iain Ballamy
Turner Sims, University of Southampton, Southampton

20 Jim Mullen with Peter Johnstone and Alyn Cosker
Oran Mor, Byres Road, Glasgow

20 John Butcher, Mark Sanders and Veryan Weston
Mjazz, St Anne's Church, Derby

20 Meltdown: Reuben James
Purcell Room at Queen Elizabeth Hall, Southbank, London SE1

20 Partikel feat Duncan Eagles
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

20 Classico Latino with Omar Puente
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

20 Luke Bainbridge
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

FRIDAY

21 Danny Piers Trio, plus Ruben Ross Quartet and Wilf Diamond Quartet
World Heart Beat Embassy Gardens, 3 Ponton Road, London SW11

21 Alan Barnes with Dean Stockdale Trio (lunchtime)
Lit & Phil, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne

21 Phil Robson's Organ Trio
Birmingham Jazz, 1000 Trades, 16 Frederick Street, Birmingham

21 Secret Night Gang
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

21 Robert Castelli
Verdict Jazz Club, 159 Edward Street, Kemptown, Brighton

21 Natacha Atlas
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

21 Natalie Duncan
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

21 Alan Barnes with Dean Stockdale Trio (evening)
Seventeen Nineteen, Church Street East, Sunderland

21 Mark Toomey Quartet
Traveller's Rest, West Auckland Road, Cockerton, Darlington

21 Strictly Smokin' Big Band
Alnwick Playhouse, Bondgate Without, Alnwick

21 Joe Steels' Borealis
Gala Theatre & Cinema, Millenium Place, Durham

21 Out Front
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

21 Hejira
Live @ Union Lane, Brampton, Cumbria

SATURDAY

22 Hejira
Cluny, Lime Street, Newcastle upon Tyne

22 Phil Robson's Organ Trio
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

22 Joe Webb Trio
Verdict Jazz Club, 159 Edward Street, Kemptown, Brighton

22 Threeway feat Steve Waterman, Steve Lodder and Ben Crosland
Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

22 Trio Magico
Quarrymen's Arts Centre, Hill Street, Creetown, Newton Stewart, Dumfries & Galloway

22 Eliane Correa and Yadira Ferrer
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

22 Daniel Casimir Big Band
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, Soho, London W1

22 Milne-Glendinning Band
Vault, East Row, Darlington

22 Nikki Iles Big Band
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

SUNDAY

23 Gaz Hughes Trio
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

20-23 Iford Jazz Festival: Ian Shaw, Karen Sharp, Elaine Delmmar and more

Iford Manor, nr Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire

Now in its third year, the Iford Jazz Festival in Wiltshire – curated by vocalist Claire Martin and set in a stunning location of Iford Manor – features performances from Elaine Delmar, Ian Shaw, Karen Sharp (pictured above) and also a celebration of Blue Note with QCBA – the sax/trumpet-led band featuring Brandon Allen and Quentin Collins. This Blue Note special will be a high energy homage to some of the most well-known artists from Blue Note's 'golden era' in the 1960s – expect reworkings of classics from Art Blakey, Jimmy Smith, Donald Byrd and Herbie Hancock.

Airshots
June 24 Radio

BBC RADIO 2 88-91 FM and DAB
Jamie Cullum show (Tues, 9pm)

BBC RADIO 3 90-93 FM and DAB
'Round Midnight (Mon-Fri 11.30pm)
Jazz Record Requests (Sun, 4pm)

BBC RADIO 6 MUSIC DAB
Gilles Peterson, Sat 3pm

JAZZ FM DAB, Sky, Alexa, smartphone, tablet and online at jazzfm.com
(Mon – Fri) 6am-6.30am Business Breakfast, 6.30am-10am Jazz FM Breakfast with Nigel Williams, 10am-2pm Midmornings with Danielle Perry, 2pm-6pm Afternoon drive with Simon Philips, 6pm-7pm Jazz FM's Greatest with Mark Walker, 7pm-9pm Dinner Jazz with Mark Walker. (Mon) 9pm-10pm The Performance Series with Ruth Fisher, 10pm-Midnight Late Night China Moses. (Tues) 9pm-10pm Jazz Travels with Sarah Ward, 10pm-Midnight Late Night China Moses. (Weds) . 9pm-10pm The Big Easy with Lil' Koko. 10pm-Midnight Late Night China Moses. (Thurs) 9pm-10pm True Brit with Helen Mayhew. 10pm-Midnight Late Night China Moses. (Fri) 9pm-10pm The Ronnie Scott's Radio Show with Ian Shaw. 10pm-1am Late Night Jazz with Helen Mayhew. (Sat) 6am-9am The Weekend Breakfast with Nia Visser, 9am-10am Jazz Shapers with Elliot Moss, 10am-2pm Nigel Williams Saturday Show, 2pm-6pm YolanDa Brown on Saturday, 6pm-9pm The Sarah Ward Collection, 9pm-10pm Jazz FM Voices, 10pm-1am The Blueprint with Chris Philips. (Sun) 6am-10am The Weekend Breakfast with Simon Phillips, 10am-1pm Tony Minvielle, 1-3pm Robbie Vincent, 3pm-5pm Sunday Afternoons with John Osborne, 5-7pm Blues and Boogie with David Freeman, 7pm-9pm Clare Teal Big Band Jazz; 9pm Sunday Discovery and 10pm-1am Somethin' Else with Jez Nelson, Ruth Fisher's Full Circle 1-3am.

ONLINE AND PODCASTS
Courtney Pine's Global Podcast at www.jazzwise.com and YouTube
www.soulandjazz.com – Mike Chadwick bi-weekly show; Tony Minvielle, first and third Wednesdays each month;
Jazz Haven with Robert Howe (8-10pm Mondays) www.avondaleradio.com/schedule/#monday
Jazz On The Beach with Adam Sieff, every Wednesday from 10.00pm - 12.00 midnight on DealRadio.co.uk; the 606 Club Straight Ahead Show with Dave Lewis, every Wednesday at 10pm.
Richard Heath's Alt 2 Show www.radio.lsu.co.uk (9-11pm Thurs);
www.mykindamusic24.com – the Jazz Cavern, Thur 9pm
Dave Self's Sounds of Jazz (4-5pm Tues) www.tunein.com/radio/Blast-1386-s6837/
www.jazzlondonradio.com
www.cosmicjazz.co.uk with Derek Merrill
www.careradio.org - Alan Steadman's Jazz Waves Sun 11pm and repeated.

REGIONAL RADIO ENGLAND
World Beats, Kane 103.7 FM www.kanefm.com (Thurs, 11am); The Jazz Show, 99.2 Hermitage FM with Peter Varden (Weds, 6pm) on 99.2 FM in north west Leicestershire area and online at www.hermitagefm.com; Jazz Kaleidoscope with Alan Musson on 102.5FM in the Southern Black Country and online at www.thebridgeradio.net (Mon, 9pm); Slipstreem Worldwide Beats, RadioReverb 97.2 FM in Brighton and radioreverb.com (11am Sunday); Late Night Jazz with Colin Dickenson, Witney Radio 99.9-107.9 FM (Thurs, 10pm)

WALES Radio Cardiff 98.7 FM, Humie Webbe's Jazz Train (Sun, 10am) and Late Night Jazz (Thurs 10-11pm) on www.witney.radio.

NORTHERN IRELAND BBC Radio Ulster 92-95 FM Walter Love (Sun, 7pm)

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND RTÉ John Kelly's Mystery Train, RTE Lyric FM (Sun-Thurs, 7-9pm); Brian Priestley's That's Jazz, Radio Kerry (Weds, 9-10pm and podcast).

ISLE OF MAN
Sweet & Swing and Jumpin' In with H and Chris Caine (Fridays, 9pm) www.manxradio.com, AM 1368, FM 89, 89.5, 97.2, 103.7, DAB +

23 Wayne Hernandez (evening) Emmanuel Waldron (lunchtime)
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

23 Bede Trio
Globe, Railway Street, Newcastle upon Tyne

23 Threeway feat Steve Waterman, Steve Lodder and Ben Crosland
Harwich Arts & Heritage Centre, Harwich

23 Bobby Watson
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

23 Matt Carmichael
St Mary's Church, Church Street, Wooler

23 Pete Allen Jazz Band
The Falcon Hotel, Breakwater Road, Bude

MONDAY

24 Kasper Rietkerk's KRSIX
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

24 John Butcher, Sharon Gal and John Edwards
Cafe Oto, 18-22 Ashwin Street, London E8

24 Robert Castelli
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

24-28 Monty Alexander D-Day
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, London W1

TUESDAY

25 Dan Reinstein
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

25 Michael John Ross
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

25 Louise Dodds and Elchin Shirinov
Newcastle Arts Centre, Westgate Road, Newcastle

25 Phil Robson's Organ Trio
Watermill Jazz, Betchworth Park Golf Club, Dorking

WEDNESDAY

26 Compound Chemistry, plus Caytra and Sound-Anthropology
World Heart Beat Embassy Gardens, 3 Ponton Road, London SW11

26 Black Top
Cafe Oto, 18-22 Ashwin Street, London E8

26 Bryan Corbett
Fleece Jazz, Stoke-by-Nayland Hotel, Colchester

26 Gaz Hughes Trio
Fougou Jazz, Livermead Cliff Hotel, Torquay

THURSDAY

27 John Law's ReCreations
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

27 Chris Bowden
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

27 Dynamo Quartet
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

27 Hejira
Music Spoken Here, The Marrs Bar, 12 Pierpoint Street, Worcester

27 Clare Teal and Jason Rebello
The Pheasantry, 152/154 Kins Road, London SW3

27 Louise Dodds and Elchin Shirinov
Marryat Hall, Dundee

27 Mark Lockheart's Dreamers
Cambridge Modern Jazz, Hidden Rooms, 7b Jesus Lane, Cambridge

24 Kenny Wheeler's Lost Scores
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16
Rare music by the great Canadian trumpeter and composer Kenny Wheeler will be performed at this commemorative performance marking 10 years since his death. Using the Wheeler archive at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM), his original scores from early BBC broadcasts in the 1970s have been reconstructed for this special evening. This is an exclusive performance and an exceptionally rare chance to hear this extraordinary music, performed by some of the finest young musicians emerging on the scene from both the RAM jazz course and visiting players from the Frost School of Music, University of Miami – alongside a legend of British jazz who was part of the original Wheeler big band sessions; Norma Winstone (pictured above). The line-up also features saxophonist Emma Rawicz and James Copus on flugel horn as part of the impressive line-up for this landmark gig.

27 Matt Seddon Sinfonietta and Cameron Scott Jazz Orchestra feat Steve Williamson
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

FRIDAY

28 Pete Tanton's Chet Set
Warkworth Memorial Hall, Castle Street, Warkworth

28 CJC 2024 Chichester All-Stars
Chichester Jazz Club, The Pallant Suite, Freemason's Hall, 7 South Pallant, Chichester

28 Richard Fairhurst Trio
Birmingham Jazz, 1000 Trades, 16 Frederick Street, Birmingham

28 Dave Lewis 1Up
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

28 Arthur Verocai with Nu Civilisation Orchestra
Barbican, Silk Street, London EC2

28-30 Upton Jazz Festival: Alan Barnes, Jane Williams, Panama Quartet and more
Upton, Upton-upon-Severn

28 BD Lenz Trio
Verdict Jazz Club, 159 Edward Street, Kemptown, Brighton

28 Ant Law, Alex Hitchcock, Jasper Høiby and Sun-Mi Hong
Glasshouse, St Mary's Square, Gateshead Quays, Gateshead

28 Paul Edis Trio
St Cuthbert's Centre, Church Hill, Crook

28 Samara
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

SATURDAY

29 Mornington Lockett
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

29 Black Art Jazz Ensemble
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, Soho, London W1

29 Tony Kofi
Peggy's Skylight, 3 George Street, Nottingham

29 Maya Andrade
Barbican, Silk Street, London EC2

29 Ni Maxine plus Frontline
Turner Sims, University of Southampton, Southampton

29 Orlando le Fleming and Romantic Funk
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

29 Janette Mason
Vortex Jazz Club, 11 Gillett Square, London N16

SUNDAY

30 Georgia Mancio (evening) Luna Cohen (afternoon)
606 Club, 90 Lots Road, London SW10

30 Charlotte Keefe
Globe, Railway Street, Newcastle upon Tyne

30 W3 Funk Sessions
Ronnie Scott's, 47 Frith Street, Soho, London W1

30 Sarah Gillespie (evening) Jazz Dynamos (lunchtime)
Pizza Express Jazz Club, 10 Dean Street, London W1

30 Gregory Porter
Lincoln Castle, Lincoln

Orlando le Fleming and Romantic Funk, 29 June

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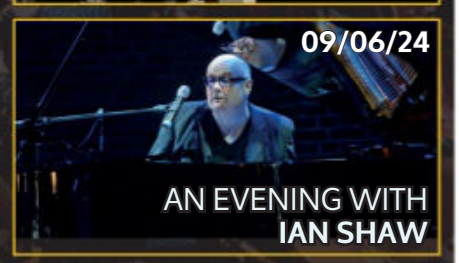

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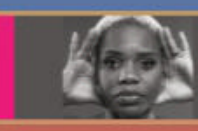
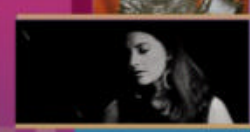

Thurs 30th May - 5.30pm:
Tutu Puoane

Thurs 30th May - 8.30pm:
Jowee Omicil's
Elements

Sun 2nd June:
Seonaid Aitken
Ensemble

Tues 4th June:
Jonathan Barber &
Vision Ahead


Wed 12th June:
Nishla Smith

Fri 14th June - 5.30pm:
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Fri 14th June - 8.30pm:
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Letters

Write in to us here at Letters Dept, Jazzwise Magazine, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB or email letters@jazzwise.com

Giving the CD its proper due

Prompted by Alex Franklin's letter on the CD/LP debate (Letters, *Jazzwise* 294), I took a quick look at the album review sections in April's edition. While an overwhelming number of new albums were available on CD (34 of 37, not including those unspecified in Short Cuts), which strongly suggests continuing importance of the format to new artists and music, only FIVE of 14 reissues reviewed (plus another five in Audiophile Corner ... no prices given!) were available on CD.

Because jazz is no longer being reissued on CD? Clearly not, just look at wonderful stuff being regularly issued by Avid, to name only one of many excellent reissue labels. But it's not being reviewed in *Jazzwise*, which means those of us more interested in listening to readily-obtainable, fairly-priced jazz reissues on CD, rather than in acquiring deliberately limited edition, high-end investment items (to open or not to open the shrink wrap!) on LP, are being ill-served by the magazine.

At this stage of the game I'll be sticking with CD, whatever the influencers say, and maybe it's time to review your reviews policy: *Jazzwise* isn't cheap!

Chris Price, Stratford, London via email

Kevin Whitlock replies: *Thanks for your letter Chris. I don't think it's fair to say that we don't write about the excellent CD sets on Avid (and labels like Acrobat too) – we review everything jazz-related that they send us! And in the last issue, we reviewed 22 Reissue/Archive albums, 14 of which were available on CD. Of the premium vinyl-only releases, most are available on CD in more widely-available editions. Re: your point on prices, we generally don't give them as they can vary wildly depending on the retailer – shop around is our advice.*

Compact discs keep on spinning

I could not agree more with Alex Franklin. It may be an age thing, but CDs have many advantages. I too sold my LPs and replaced them with the CD format. I kept back a signed Tony Bennett and a Peggy Lee/George Shearing LP with intros (as the CDs do not include those intros). In many cases there is better value with additional tracks, three or four albums on one double CD. Sound quality is very good and space saving is also a benefit. Ellington's *Paris Blues* CD has the added benefit of excerpts from the film, just one example.

On balance, CDs have more advantages than shortfalls over the LP format. Keep them going, I say. CDs are great for *Jazzwise* as well, imagine trying to attach a record to the front of a magazine on the odd occasion that music is added to the cover! I know you will answer that technology has moved on, but sadly not for me.

Harvey Comerford, North Dorset via email

Blessed Beard

I, like many, have been so shocked by the passing of [US pianist and keyboardist] Jim Beard. We will miss his funny and quirky sense of humour. He is an exceptional talent. His compositions and playing are unique and inspiring. God, I'm gonna miss him. I was fortunate enough to meet him, and shake his talented hand. We are fortunate to have such an accomplished body of work to ease the soul. God bless you JB!

Jim Ash, Winchester via email

Scotland's Jazz Nights No More

In the Airshots column in *Jazzwise*, under Scotland, the programme *Jazz Nights* continues to be listed. Unfortunately, this programme, which was hosted by the excellent Seonaid Aitken, was removed from Radio Scotland's schedule back in March 2023. A petition, backed by a number of Scottish jazz musicians such as saxophonist Tommy Smith, asking for the retention of the sole jazz offering on Radio Scotland was submitted to the BBC, but proved fruitless. Scotland has many fine jazz musicians – but there's not a single reflection of this on its national radio station. *Jazz Nights* was a programme I thoroughly enjoyed and wish it, or a similar programme, to return to Radio Scotland.

On a positive note, *Jazzwise* is an excellent and informative publication and I read it while listening, on Spotify, to many of the artists who feature each month in the magazine.

Rab Davidson, Newton Mearns, East Renfrewshire

Future's bright with the Movers

Good to read your 'pen sketch' of Olivia Cuttill in your April issue. One omission from the summary of experience is her excellent contribution to Leeds-based The Sorcerer's terrific recent release, *I Too Am A Stranger*.

And while it's great that she is due to play at Ronnie Scott's next month, recognition of her contribution to the jazz scene in Leeds, where she's currently based after graduating from Leeds Conservatoire last year, would have balanced the London focus.

Nevertheless, your regular focus on the young talent burgeoning across the country is exemplary, so keep it up!

Paul Bunting, Ilkley via email

Brubeck mystery

In his recent Audiophile Corner article Kevin Whitlock discussed, among others, the Dave Brubeck Quartet album *Jazz at Oberlin*.

I have a vinyl copy of this album, bought in the early 1960s, and I have, for a long time, been puzzled by two peculiarities, the first of which concerns the order of the tracks. The sleeve lists the tracks in the order: 'These Foolish Things', 'Perdido', 'Stardust', 'The Way You Look Tonight' and 'How High the Moon', and this is the order in which the sleeve notes describe them, but the labels on the record show Side One to contain the last two, and Side Two to contain the first three.

The second is the track 'Perdido' itself, although I wasn't aware of this at the time of purchase as I was yet to hear the 'standard' version. The composition is correctly credited to Juan Tizol, and the structure is still 'rhythm changes', but its title on the record label is actually 'Perdido (Lost)', and the head played by Paul Desmond bears no resemblance to that which everybody (?) knows and loves.

Kevin mentions Lloyd Davis' high fever at the time of recording but also, again according to the sleeve notes, bass player Ron Crotty had just handed in his notice and was playing "with less than his usual efficiency" requiring Dave Brubeck to call out to him during 'These Foolish Things'.

Further to these factors, Brubeck and Desmond were in the middle of an argument when they took to the stage and obviously continued this by attempting to outplay each other throughout the concert.

Graham D'Aucourt, Chippenham, Wiltshire

The author writes

It was good to see the review of my book (*John McLaughlin: From Miles & Mahavishnu to The 4th Dimension*) in *Jazzwise* 294. Authors and artists should of course take criticism on the chin, but a few points in Andy Robson's piece need clarification. He mentions a dearth of information about John's early blues/R&B sessions and work with Lifetime and Miles, recommending Colin Harper's *Bathed In Lightning*.

But in my introduction I both recommend Colin's book and also clearly state that my emphasis will rather be on John's more recent career, hitherto pretty much unexplored in print. As for the "cut and paste" nature of my sources, John was aware I was writing the book and did respond to some questions via a third party, though didn't give a formal interview, but key collaborators such as Dennis Chambers, Danny Gottlieb and Stu Goldberg did. **Matt Phillips, via email**

Corrections...

On page 31 of the April issue, the photo with Miles Davis should have credited Chet and Rolf Ericson (not Erikson), if you're Swedish, as he was, it could also be spelt, Ericsson. The photo is also actually from September 1953, not 1952 as was printed in the issue.

And tech gremlins got the better of the byline for the review (on page 50) of Vince Guaraldi's *It Was a Short Summer, Charlie Brown* – which was in fact written by Alyn Shipton – not Simon Spillett.

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